

***Telling stories about the authority of place:
ethnographizing Tudi Gong in contemporary Taiwan***

Alessandro Dell'Orto

***Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in the subject of
Social Anthropology***

July 1998

***School of Oriental and African Studies
Department of Anthropology and Sociology
University of London***



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*A mia mamma Angela,
alla memoria di mio papa' Vincenzo,
e a tutti i miei amici Taiwanese*

謹獻給親愛的母親
已辭世的父親
以及我所有的臺灣朋友們

*To my mother Angela,
to the good memory of my father Vincenzo,
and to my Taiwanese friends*

Abstract

This thesis examines the cult of *Tudi Gong*, the '*spirit of the place*,' both as a religio-social phenomenon of intrinsic interest, but also as an 'appropriate vehicle' and a 'fixed reference point' for exploring and analysing the dynamic social changes which have been occurring in contemporary Taiwan, and people's strategic adaptations to these changes. Despite the prevalence and popularity of the '*spirit of the place*' among the people of Taiwan, there is a dearth of discursive attention to the figure of *Tudi Gong* in anthropological literature. In the six substantive chapters of the thesis, particular attention is given to the changing Taiwanese senses of place, community and identity. In addition, reflecting upon his ethnographic fieldwork, the author also engages in a theoretical discussion on *ethnographic writing* as well as on a number of key concepts related to the *notions of place and space*.

In the first section of the thesis, the initial chapter presents the ethnographic data from *Datong* district in *Taipei* city with an emphasis on the various *Tudi Gong* temples and their connections with the local historical development of the places in which they are sited. The second chapter focuses on the small rural village of *Yongxing* in *Nantou* county. In particular, it dwells upon the place of *Tudi Gong* cults in the village and the villagers' senses of attachment to place/community. In the third chapter the author speculates on the extent to which the previous two chapters, although belonging to the same research topic, seem to show a substantial variation in the form of writing and in the way knowledge, understanding and senses of the places in question have been presented in an ethnographic account. The author notes that although anthropologists have discussed issues regarding the extent to which their writings may *represent and shape places and cultures*, the question of whether the *places and cultures* they study may shape and dictate the style and tenor of their ethnographic writing does not seem to have been coherently addressed in anthropological literature.

The second section starts with a comprehensive as well as ethnographically detailed fourth chapter on the 'functions' and connotations of *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan. The following chapter draws on a wide variety of oral and textual materials as well as iconographies and representations of *Tudi Gong* in the various mass media (e.g. television, newspapers, etc.). By these means, the author hopes to give the reader a flavour of the ways the Taiwanese talk of, experience, represent and write about *Tudi Gong* in the practice of everyday life. It also seeks to make a contribution to the debate about representation in anthropology. Chapter six argues that the study of *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan is a relevant locus from which to understand and discuss local senses of place, community and identity as well as informing, from an unorthodox perspective, the analysis of Chinese religion in Taiwan's changing society. The conclusion combines the findings of both sections and challenges anthropology to reassess the position of an *anthropology of place* in the discipline.

Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude to:

Jean Lefevre who, during Summer 1992 in Taipei, told me the first story about Tudi Gong. His outstanding knowledge and experience of 'things Chinese and Taiwanese' have been a constant and valuable reference point during my ethnographic process

the numerous friends and scholars in Great Britain, France, Italy and especially Taiwan who, in different ways, have suggested, encouraged, helped ... both in the 'field' and in the 'text'

Adam, Lai guzhang, Ama, their families and the people of Yongxing village for their warm welcoming and help

Mr. Gao and all my 'raconteurs' in Datong district and in the city of Taipei, many of whom have become good friends

Lin Mei-Rong, who during my affiliation with the Institute of Ethnology (Academia Sinica, Taipei), shared with me her incomparable expertise about, and profound attachment to Taiwan

and especially Stuart Thompson, my friend and supervisor, whose innumerable insights, competent advice and amicable encouragement have made my ethnographic process a creative and enjoyable experience

I also wish to thank:

the Institute of Ethnology (Academia Sinica, Taipei), the Ricci Institute for Chinese Studies (Taipei) and especially the Xaverians for their encouragement and assistance

and

the Central Research Fund (University of London), the Centre for Chinese Studies (Taipei) and especially the Longoni Foundation (Italy) for their financial support

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***The multilocation and multilocution of
Tudi Gong in contemporary Taiwan:
an introduction***

Positing and positioning the reader/writer

Place and senses of place

*It is, I think, what the Earth God symbolizes
that holds my interest.*

*It stands for a sense of stability,
of security, of identity
with fixed and unmovable reference points,
of community and of belonging.*

Hugh Baker



***The multilocation and multilocution of Tudi Gong
in contemporary Taiwan: an introduction***

Images of and shrines to *Tudi Gong* 土地公 can be seen almost anywhere on the island of Taiwan.¹ In homes, shops, restaurants, urban neighbourhoods or rural villages, He occupies a place, both literal and imagined, among the people as well as within the territory He is protecting. In the most isolated fields the farmers' work is 'watched over' by the attentive and benevolent *Tudi Gong*. Even the dead of the community continue to sense His presence by having Him placed on the side of their tombs. The sayings: 'every two or three steps one can see a *Tudi Gong* temple' (三步兩步可見土地公廟), or 'at the beginning and end of each field there is a *Tudi Gong*' (田頭田尾土地公), emphasise the **multilocation** of his presence among the people of Taiwan.

The multilocation of *Tudi Gong* is, at the same time, His **multilocution**. Each place He is guarding has its **stories to tell**, and so the cult of this most ancient and popular Chinese deity lives on in the narratives of the people and places of contemporary Taiwan.

Tudi Gong has been variously translated into English as 'Spirit of the Earth,' 'Territory God,' 'Earth-God,' 'Lord of the Land,' 'Tutelary Deity of the Site-Locality,' 'God of the Soil,' 'Locality God' and 'God of the Place,' inter alia. This multiplicity of terms gives some flavour of the range of 'functions' and 'connotations' which *Tudi Gong* is given in people's interpretations of the cult and in textual sources.²

¹ * The iconographic representation of *Tudi Gong* on the previous page is from Liu Wen-San (1971: 51) and the quotation is from Baker (1981: 1). In addition:

* the Chinese romanization I have employed in this thesis follows the *Pinyin* system. I have left untouched those systems of romanization which have been used by the authors I have quoted. For the romanization of Taiwanese terms, I have followed the suggestion of Mr. Fang Nian-Qiang, director of the Taiwanese department at the *Taipei Language Institute*

* unless otherwise indicated and acknowledged in the text, the reader should assume that I am the 'author' of all photos and maps

* translations from Chinese and Taiwanese texts used in this thesis are mine, although in some cases I have discussed them with my Taiwanese friends

* the style of the bibliography follows the anthropological journal previously known as *Man*

² The Chinese character 土 *tu* refers to 'earth, soil, land, territory, local, native', and 地 *di* has the meaning of 'earth, land, soil, ground, region, territory, place, locality, position, situation.' See Liang Shih-chiu (ed. in chief) 1991 [1971]. *A new practical Chinese-English dictionary*. Taipei: The Far East Book Co., Ltd.

The character 公 *gong* is more complicated. Considering its association with *Tudi* it seems to refer to the 'first of old China's five grades of nobility or to an old Chinese official rank' (see Liang Shih-chiu 1991, above). The *gong*, therefore, refers to the 管圍 *guanwei*, the territory that *Tudi Gong* takes care of, and not to the 年齡 *nianling*, age.

The *gong* can be translated as Lord or Spirit protecting a specific place, territory, rather than 'God' which is a commonly used translation. Saso points out that, 'the divinities in the temples and on the family altars can hardly be called gods. They are rather the spirits of human beings who lived long ago. They were eventually canonized, and became the patrons of the world of spirits which governs human affairs here below' (Saso 1968: iii). I am inclined to agree with Saso's view and refer to *Tudi Gong* as a Spirit protecting people and communities living in specific places, territories and lands.

During the first stage of my fieldwork, the multilocation, multilocution and the various roles that people ascribe to *Tudi Gong* appeared to me as somewhat cryptic, but I have learned to regard this very multifacetedness as heuristically advantageous and of potential relevance for my anthropological analysis. To a certain degree, it reflects the ambiguity of defining, in a theoretical manner, key terms such as **place**, **locale**, **territory**, **locality**, **sense of place**, **community**, and **identity**, and the problems of sorting the complexity of the interrelationships among these key words. It also replicates the differential, multiple and somewhat contrasting senses of place, community and identity that people experience and imagine in the practice of everyday life.

The multiplicity of *Tudi Gong*'s iconographies, as they have been represented by the Chinese through time and space, seem to convey the sense that Hugh Baker associates with this most famous and 'kind-hearted' of all the Spirits inhabiting the Chinese pantheon. *Tudi Gong* 'stands for a sense of stability, of security, of identity with fixed and unmovable reference points, of community and of belonging' (Baker 1981: 1). Important events occurring in the lives of individuals and communities are reported to Him in a manner analogous to notification at the local police station or registry office. His help is sought by farmers as well as business people, by shopkeepers as well as housekeepers.

Given His good nature and His low-level position in the Chinese pantheon, *Tudi Gong* is often said to be cheated or bribed by His human clientele. His proximity to people makes Him unable to exert any kind of malignant power on His worshippers. Successful gamblers are often said 'to have made deals with [*Tudi Gong*, while] ... menstruating women and people who have had a family member die within the past year ... are not excluded from participating in the ceremonies' to celebrate *Tudi Gong* (Huang Shu-Min 1981: 98).

On this and other counts He is shown not to be a stickler for regulations and formal proscriptions, as other deities may be. He is compassionate and has human like qualities. As a Taiwanese friend told me, '**He is a Spirit who understands the human heart, its weaknesses as well as aspirations, and the ways it changes and adjusts to new places and situations.**' The theme of *Tudi Gong*'s 'understanding,' 'flexibility' and 'benevolence' was often addressed by Taiwanese friends during my fieldwork. They thus regarded Him as the '人間的神,' 'the people's deity.'

In time of need, however, people would be more concerned with *Tudi Gong*'s *ling* 靈, His 'miraculous power.' In fact, if His *ling* is no longer efficacious, He may be temporarily sanctioned or even replaced by the community.³

Some of my raconteurs pointed out that there have been cases in which *Tudi Gongs* have been left in the sun for not having managed to provide the rain needed for agriculture; or they have not been worshipped for a while because of delays in granting people's requests for help; or they have been mutilated and then thrown away for having failed to indicate to gamblers the

³ For a further discussion of *ling* (alive, efficacious, powerful), the reader can refer to Sangren (1987), especially chapters 8 and 11.

exact numbers to be played in lotteries. It was explained that such a contractual relationship between people and deities - which, I believe, is not only a characteristic unique to Chinese folk religion - seems to be quite widespread in contemporary Taiwan.

This leads me to speculate on whether senses of specific places wax and wane concomitantly with the 'magical power' of *Tudi Gong* and other Chinese deities⁴ or, in more general terms, in accordance with a dialectic between places and *Tudi Gongs*. This, I feel, can be traced on three interconnected levels.

Firstly, the fact that some *Tudi Gongs* are thought as having more *ling* than others has often made the places where they are located more attractive to both worshippers and visitors. In more general terms, I wonder whether the fact that some places seem to gather momentum towards an intensified 'sense of place' in people's feeling and interpretations, might not be ascribable to the *ling* of some gods, ghosts and ancestors, whose temples are sited in a specific locality.

Tudi Gong, for example, seems to have had the capacity, in several cases, of endowing specific places through the 'authority' of His presence. This authority is mainly due to the efficaciousness and durability of His miraculous performance or linked to the fact that a specific *Tudi Gong* may have been a local personage or a local ancestor. Petrie pointed out that there are '*as many personifications... as there are shrines to him... Usually these gods are the spirit of a local personage, historically known in the locality and famous for his personal accomplishments*' (Petrie 1972: 39), accomplishments and 'good deeds' (功德) which were performed to help the people. The Chinese saying that '*the birth - or presence - of heroes brings glory to a place*' (地靈人傑) may be somehow applicable to the various *Tudi Gongs*. Goodrich (1991: 388) quotes a letter from the *Chinese Recorder* which says:

a distinguished literary man, who died 50 miles away from here a thousand years or more ago, has, within the past ten years, become the supreme object of adoration by the people of this and surrounding villages. Ten years ago little or nothing was heard of him. Five years ago they built him a gorgeous temple ... whatever prosperity they have they attribute to him. ⁵

Lefevre (1990: 3) stresses that, in contemporary Taiwan, *Tudi Gong* can be an ancestor of a local family. This is the case for a *Hakka* community in *Pingdong* district, one of whom told the story that, after his death, his grand-uncle (younger brother of his grand-father) was chosen by the community as its local *Tudi Gong*.

⁴ As a low-level spirit *Tudi Gong*'s power is limited, and He is subject to surveillance from higher-ranking deities.

⁵ Goodrich quotes the *Chinese Recorder* (1892: 513). This, however, refers to China.

Although the view that a *Tudi Gong* is the personification of a famous local personage or a local ancestor is quite widespread in Taiwan, during fieldwork I was not able to discover which local figures, if any, were personified by the several *Tudi Gong* I researched upon. My feeling is that most people did not seem to know or be concerned with the origins of *Tudi Gong*.

Often I have heard people saying, '*the Tudi Gong of that specific place has more ling*' and have encountered many people who normally, or for special events, such as in the sickness of a relative or friend, would worship *Tudi Gong* at more than one location, at the local temple in their neighborhood as well as at specific *Tudi Gong* temples with a reputation as having more 'miraculous power' (*ling*).

In some cases, the area surrounding these *Tudi Gong* temples has been transformed into a recreational park. *Checheng* 車城 village (*Pingdong* 屏東, southern Taiwan) is believed to have built the biggest *Tudi Gong* temple in the world, a four-storey temple which accommodates several deities of the Chinese pantheon as well as museums, recreational areas and, around it, a large park. In recent years, *Checheng's Tudi Gong* temple has attracted thousands of visitors from all over Taiwan.

Secondly, it has to be stressed that some places exert a power of attraction on many Taiwanese on account of their beauty, geomancy, memorability and durability. These places seem to have enhanced the magical power of temples and deities located in the area or to have inspired some local people to build a new temple. I found a very small temple dedicated to *Tudi Gong* near *Taidong* 台東 (south-east of Taiwan), among the trees and very close to the sea. An elderly man was in charge of it. He explained to me that he inherited the surrounding land from his ancestors who were once the landlords of that locality. The development of tourism brings thousands of people every year to enjoy the eastern coast of Taiwan. This is why he decided to build a temple dedicated to *Tudi Gong* to guarantee safety, peace and enjoyment for himself and his visitors - who usually stopped for a short worship - both on the land and in the sea.⁶ A further example is the recent re-furbishing of the *Tudi Gong* temple situated in *Jiufen* 九份, a small village one-hour drive from *Taipei* which, over the last few years, has become a major touristic attraction especially for the young people of *Taipei*.

Thirdly, there are also cases in which the 'power of place' and 'power of *Tudi Gong*' (or other deities) have been merged since the first 'community' settled in a specific locality. My ethnographic data from *Datong* district, which I have presented in the first chapter of this thesis, seem to show that some places and some *Tudi Gong* temples, which have become memorable through time, are regarded as distinctive by local inhabitants through association with events of the past that somehow continue to live on in people's personal and collective narratives.

It is a moot point whether *Tudi Gong* popularity and appeal has waxed or waned in recent years in Taiwan. Despite the fact that over the last few years *Tudi Gong's* 'miraculous power'

⁶ The association of *Tudi Gong* with the sea/water is an aspect to which I will refer briefly in the second part of chapter four.

(ling) has been questioned by the *Dajiale* 大家樂 movement,⁷ His statues, images and representations have not diminished in quantity. On the contrary, ***'it seems that every year in Taiwan, there is a mass production of statues representing Tudi Gong,'*** Mr. Gao told me. My attempt to know how many statues are made each year or, at least, to estimate tentatively the number of temples which are dedicated to *Tudi Gong* on Taiwan, sounded like a joke to my Taiwanese friends:

you will never been able to know it. There must be several thousand temples on the island. These multiply with the development of places, especially in the city. Temples dedicated to Tudi Gong or any other deity, normally increase as the Taiwanese do not like to destroy temples. It is bad luck.

Tudi Gong is more popular even than *Mazu* 媽祖 or *Guan Gong* 關公 with whose images He is often associated. The multilocation of *Tudi Gong* presence in Taiwan seems to show the profound attachment that the Taiwanese have for this deity. ***'It is like our habit of keeping photos of our good friends,'*** a young student told me. ***'He is portrayed as a jolly and friendly elderly man. We are not afraid of him,'*** another one added, implicitly referring to the fact that some deities and some temples do induce a sense of fear and that it is better not to come too close to them.

Adam, one of my best friends on Taiwan, explained to me that the relationship between *Tudi Gong* and the Chinese resembles that between 'old friends' (老朋友) or 'classmates' (同學). Although it is not always possible to meet or stay together, friendship does not diminish. It does not need too many 'meetings' to strengthen it. The absence of regular worship on the part of some, does not mean that *Tudi Gong* is not important for the Chinese. ***'Tudi Gong is very close to us, and so very flexible,'*** he pointed out. One may say that proximity makes the whole relationship between *Tudi Gong* and people very 'flexible' (有彈性). Even those who do not worship *Tudi Gong* on a regular basis have some kind of relationship and idea/concept/view about him. Adam stressed the attachment the Chinese have for their 'land' (土地), both in practice and as an idea-concept-view.

Mr. Pan 潘, a good friend that I met in Canada on my way to Taiwan,⁸ stressed that,

when the Chinese settle down in a new place, the first temple they build is a Tudi Gong temple. If we move to a new house, in Taiwan or abroad, the first deity we worship is Tudi Gong: He has to know of our new location so that He can protect

⁷ See chapter four, the part entitled, 'Association with gambling and prostitution.'

⁸ During the revision of this introductory part, I was informed of the death of Mr. Pan. I wish to thank him, his wife Anna and his daughters Alexandra and Frances for their help, encouragement and friendship through all these years.

our families and our neighbourhoods. When I arrived in Canada a few years ago I informed Tudi Gong of my family change of address.

The Chinese pay special attention when moving to a new place. A favourable time has to be chosen and several steps have to be followed when taking up residence in a new territory. I have heard a good number of people telling me that at this time worshipping *Tudi Gong* both in the new house and at the local temple is a matter of extreme importance.⁹

Schipper has pointed out that, in the history of Taiwan, *'Tu-di Gong played an important role as the first cult established by new settlers to protect them against demons and aborigines alike'* (Schipper 1977: 770, note 16). Over the last three hundred years, the history of Chinese settlements on Taiwan has never been peaceful. It has been marked by fierce fights between aborigines and Chinese settlers - and among these settlers, too - in order to take possession of the best land and water resources on the island. The land, as Baker writes, *'must have its supernatural as well as its mortal master'* (Baker 1981: 4), and the establishment of *Tudi Gong* cults shows

a concern with the earth, with location and permanence. In the Chinese world of natural and man-made disasters, of precarious peace and fickle rulers, land was the traditional anchor. Come drought and hunger, come rapacious bandit or greedy mandarin, come fire or disease, with land there was always hope of rejuvenation and recuperation (Baker 1981: 4).

Tudi Gong's domain, however, extends well beyond the relationship between man and the land. His agricultural function - thus *Tudi Gong* has often been translated as *Earth God* - is but one aspect which should be integrated with notions of territory (Baker 1979: 1), locality and community (Wolf 1974: 134; Feuchtwang 1992: 96), and place (Sangren 1987; Wolf 1974: 134).

The Chinese, in fact, attribute two main functions to *Tudi Gong*. Wolf describes them as the policing of 'ghosts' (鬼), *'the supernatural equivalent of bandits, beggars, and other dangerous strangers'* (Wolf 1974: 134) which are associated with the earth, and spying as well as taking records of all the most important events occurring in the community He is protecting. *Tudi Gong's* 'surveillance' function, thus, makes Him *'the king of gui, the locality's official'* (Feuchtwang 1992: 95). He will then have to report to *Chenghuang* 城隍, the Spirit of the walls and ditches (City God). Although in the Chinese religious pantheon the Stove God (灶神) occupies an inferior place to that of *Tudi Gong*, he can report directly to *Tian Gong* 天公 (*Yuhuang Dadi* 玉皇大帝), the emperor of all spirits. The Stove God, in fact, is often regarded

⁹ In this case the worship of *Tudi Gong* is performed in connection with that of the 'ground spirit' or 'spirit of the foundations': 地基主.

as *Tian Gong*'s younger brother. As Wolf stresses, '*the apparent departure from bureaucratic principles is thus explained away as nepotism*' (Wolf 1974: 139).

My point here is that no matter how different people explain and 'talk about' the Chinese religious pantheon, *Tudi Gong* seems to be the spirit closest to the Chinese. His lower status in the supernatural hierarchy makes Him the most loved spirit that one can rely on or, as explained by an old woman, '*whether out of doors or indoors, one depends on Tudi Gong*' (Feuchtwang 1992: 97).

Positing and positioning the reader/writer

In terms of writing and reading, the openness of a relationship is a consequence of producing a text. If reading is a creative process, then a text is open to creativity whenever it is read, to a potentially infinite number of readings. If to be open, to give of oneself, is the Levinasian basis of ethics, then to recognise the openness of one's own writing and to release it to the reader is of fundamental importance. If the production of language and the construction of texts is central to the process of self-definition, then to abandon what has been written to the desires of a readership is to place one's identity in the trust of the reader (Revill 1993: 125).

As a strategic and open-ended view, the previous part has, I hope, allowed the reader to begin familiarising himself or herself with some of the themes which will be presented in this thesis. This first part also represents the thoughts and ideas, modified slightly through hindsight, to which I was exposed when I first decided to undertake a study of *Tudi Gong* cults and temples in Taiwan.

The *multilocation and multilocation of Tudi Gong* in the context of contemporary Taiwan, and the ethnographic insights they generated during my stay on the island (1990-1993) prior to my fieldwork, considerably inspired my theoretical approach to *place and senses of place*. This attempt, which was produced as part of my MPhil research report in London (Dell'Orto 1994), will be presented in the following pages.¹⁰ By this means, I wish that the reader may be able to 'site' and 'sight' *place*, and its identifications as *locale, territory, locality, sense of place, community* and *identity*, in the same way as I did and in the same act of reading my ethnographic account. In fact, though in different ways and to different degrees, these key terms have often been referred to and have engendered various speculative discussions in the six substantive chapters of this thesis. After journeying through the two main sections, my concluding chapter will re-position the ethnographic and theoretical data and insights previously presented and attempt to contribute towards an *anthropology of place* from the perspective of *Tudi Gong*.

I feel that the above brief orientation should be enough for the reader to turn this page and 'walk along' the various physical and theoretical routes that my ethnographic process has generated. In the very act of reading, in fact, the reader should gradually become familiar with, and aware of, the same 'forces,' 'orientations' and 'sightings' which I, myself, experienced in exploring the double perspective characterising my research: that of *Tudi Gong* and that of

¹⁰ The main fieldwork on which this thesis is based was carried out from July 1994 to December 1995 and from September 1996 to January 1997.

place. In the very act of reading, the reader should become acquainted with *stories* of people and places and the extent to which these have intermingled with my own. In the very act of reading, the reader should 'establish a connection' (建立關係) with the various *authors* (including myself) of the *stories* which will follow, as I attempted to do with my 'raconteurs' in Taiwan.

There is no need, I reckon, for me to construct artificial parameters at the beginning of this thesis to conform (or force) your reading to my own expectations. The *story* that you are about to read will tell you its own tale in its very unfolding and will point out to you the 'logics' behind its creation and development.

The reader has probably started to perceive that in this thesis I wish to put a stress on the ethnographic process rather than the final product and to contribute towards reducing the distance between *culture* as it is known during fieldwork and *culture* as it is portrayed in a written account, between ethnography as a process and as a product, as a method and as genre (Agar 1995). In chapter three, in fact, I will suggest that *'as in the field so in the text ... the construction of anthropological knowledge is an ongoing process in which different poles of experience and interpretation, those of the anthropologist and those of the people on the ground, are created and re-created in the same ethnographic process.'*

'As with traditional Chinese landscape paintings, which lack a single fixed point of reference in order to allow the viewer greater freedom in appreciating the scene, topographical maps often require the reader to change orientation as his or her eyes move across the surface' (Smith 1996: 3). You, reader, will 'find your way around' through the various ethnographic and theoretical routes as I myself did during my ethnographic process. Your own reading of the text I am presenting to you will travel through different, overlapping and sometimes opposing landscapes of meaning that you will, consciously or unconsciously, posit on the pages of this ethnographic account.

However, before releasing my own writing and placing my own identity, and that of my 'raconteurs,' in the trust of the reader (see Revill's quotation above), I intend merely to put forward a few brief considerations which may be useful for a preliminary reflexive awareness of my own writing (see chapter three).

Telling stories

'The meaning of a place, for the people who live there is best captured by the stories that they tell about it, about the elements that comprise it, and about the events that took place within its bounds' (Ryden 1993: 45).

There is a four-dimension characteristic embedded in the stories which will be told in this ethnographic account. Stories about *Tudi Gong* and *place* are told by my 'raconteurs,' both 'people on the ground' and other anthropologists, and by myself. What I wish to ask of the

reader is to become an *author* himself or herself by telling his or her own story in the same process of reading other people's stories. In this vein, de Certeau, who has been one of my favourite storytellers in this thesis, pointed out that

the story does not express a practice. It does not limit itself to telling about a movement. It 'makes' it. One understands it, then, if one enters into this movement oneself...The storyteller falls in step with the lively pace of his fables. He follows them in their turns and detours, thus exercising an art of thinking. Like the knight in chess, he crosses the immense chessboard of literature with the 'curved' movement of these stories, like Ariadne's threads, formal games of practices. In that very action he 'interprets' these fables as a pianist 'interprets' a musical composition. He executes them, privileging two 'figures' in which the Greek art of thinking is particularly active: the dance and the combat, that is, the very figures that the writing of the story makes use of (de Certeau 1988: 81).¹¹

As I will stress in chapter five, *'stories and representations of Tudi Gong can be never-ending and can hardly be captured in writing... stories, like places, contain forces of their own which entice the teller, the listener and the writer into multiple - sometimes parallel, overlapping or contradictory - landscapes of meaning. Stories, like places, narrate the core of human experience; they are localised experiential creations which describe and question the very essence which characterises specific places and people's everyday life. But stories, like places can be ambiguous, they show and hide and while they tell, they can lie. That is why, probably, stories, like places, are so fascinating: they reflect, in many ways, the multilocation, multilocation and ambiguity of human experience and, consequently, they can be a privileged locus, for the anthropological endeavour, in understanding the fragmentations and confusions of life'* (Entrikin 1991).

Stories for multiple audiences

The *multilocation*, *multilocation* and people's relationship with and senses of *Tudi Gong* and *place* have, I suggest, 'dictated' considerably the stories I am about to present in this thesis. In the text as in the field, I have attempted to be open to the different 'forces' and 'voices' (including my own) which seem to characterise both *Tudi Gong* and *place*, thus questioning, to a certain degree, anthropology's *will* to pattern and fix people and places in ethnographic writing.

¹¹ The emphasis in this quotation has been added.

In this vein, in the very act of reading, the reader may look for different things when in front of or confronted by a text, as the storyteller or the listener may posit his or her stress and attention to different sides of a story. The multivocality that this process of understanding can generate has led me to view my writing as a conjunction of polythetic ethnographic and theoretical routes which may be differently 'suitable' for different audiences, thus extending, hopefully, beyond the academic localities to which this thesis is primarily oriented. For each reader, in fact, the various chapters of this thesis may speak in different ways and, as in the field, they can engender further ontological and epistemological routes to be experienced and explored.

On reading strategies

At the end of my writing this thesis, I felt that I needed to engage in a further exercise: that of *becoming a reader of my own text*. I did it and, as in the field, I must say that it was an enjoyable experience. Through the pages of this ethnographic account, I was able to re-visit and meet, once again, people and places who were the main 'raconteurs' during my ethnographic process. The sequence of the various chapters and their theoretical insights also allowed me to re-think the processes through which I became familiar about and understood *Tudi Gong* and *place*. What my 'raconteurs' and myself were *not able to tell* may be indicative, on the one hand, of the spatial and temporal contingency and limitations of fieldwork and ethnographic writing and, on the other, of the fact that for various reasons (including ignorance!) not everything can - nor should - be told of people's and anthropologists' interpretations and practices of everyday life.

The reader, however, may wish to employ different strategies in reading this thesis. You may, in fact, compose your own sequence of chapters (and omit some) depending on your interest and/or the purpose of your reading. If you are interested more in ethnography you may first read chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5. Or if you wish to have first an understanding of the theoretical terrain in which I have posited my ethnography, you may start with the next part on *Place and senses of place*, followed by chapters 3 and 5. If you prefer a combined theoretical and ethnographic reflection on the main themes of this thesis you may start by reading the last part on *Re-telling stories about Tudi Gong and place: retrospectives and prospectives* or, as my mother replied when I told her the title and part of the content of my thesis: ***'I would like to hear these stories from you, vivavoce!'*** I think that my mother got the point. Stories convey their immediacy and weight in the very act of telling them, *vivavoce*. Both the *teller* and the *listener* join together to give meaning not just to the stories but to themselves, the interlocutors, and to the place/world they inhabit.

Place and senses of place

The significance and complexity of the study of place: an introduction

In 1976, Relph wrote that '*place and sense of place do not lend themselves to scientific analysis for they are inextricably bound up with all the hopes, frustrations, and confusions of life, and possibly because of this social scientists have avoided these topics*' (Relph 1976: preface). In more recent years, his phenomenological approach to the study of place and placelessness, has been followed by several studies which have speculated about the significance of 'place' in understanding modern life.¹ In other words, 'place' now 'matters' to the humanities as well as social sciences to the extent that it has become a privileged 'locus' for understanding the fragmentations and confusions of life² (Entrikin 1991).

Despite (or, perhaps, because of) its significant conceptual and practical potential, *place* remains '*one of those contestable concepts whose application is a matter of dispute. In geography, it is often used synonymously with location, point, area, or space*' (Agnew 1987: 26).³

The use of the term in everyday life shows that place is '*one of the most multi-layered and multi-purpose words in our language*' (Harvey 1993: 4). Generic qualities of place (such as milieu, locality, location, local, neighbourhood, region, territory) and particular kinds of place

¹ The restructuring of space and the consequent importance of place in social life have been particularly addressed in social geography. In the 1970s, studies of 'place' and especially 'sense of place' were employed by human geographers to distinguish their approach from that of positivistic geographers. Phenomenological studies by Relph (1976) and Tuan Yi-Fu (1977; 1990) have been regarded as philosophical foundations to 'place' and 'sense of place.' Such a philosophical approach has continued in the 1980s in the work of Seamon and Mugerauer (1989) and Black et al. (1989). Furthermore, in the 1980s a variety of works have been published in economic geography (Massey and Allen 1992), historical geography (Pred 1984), human geography and social historical analysis (Sack 1986) and political geography (Agnew 1987; Johnston 1991). The work of Entrikin (1991) has attempted to mediate between different notions of place.

Other authors who have further enlarged the discussion on the topic are: Giddens and Harvey (see bibliography), Lefebvre (1991), Soja (1989), Carter et al. (1993), Duncan & Ley (1993), Keith & Pile (1993) and King (1991).

I am aware of the existence of a burgeoning literature on the subject. However, the purpose of my selection is not to give a fully comprehensive account, but rather to earmark a variety of approaches which, I feel, have a particular pertinence with respect to my fieldwork agenda.

² With regard to the significance of the spatial, Soja stresses that '*today... it may be space more than time that hides consequences from us, the 'making of geography' more than the 'making of history' that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world*' (Soja 1989: 1). I wonder, however, whether the 'making of geography' and the 'making of history' should be seen as separated processes and whether it is possible to talk about one without the other.

³ Agnew (1987: 26) quotes Gallie, W. B. 1955-6. Essentially contested concepts. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56, 167-98.

(such as city, village, town, megalopolis, state) intermingle with more specific connotations of place (such as home, hearth, 'turf,' community, homeland, landscape).⁴

People's attachments to monuments, churches, temples, squares, whose very names evoke memories of specific places and events for individuals as well as 'communities,' are created and re-created in and through the practices of everyday life. The 'landscapes of leisure and entertainment,'⁵ whether Tokyo's Disneyland or Paris's Euro Disney, and the 'landscapes of war and death,' such as Rwanda or former Yugoslavia, *'are seen as not so much segregated sites but modes of representation that permeate virtually all landscapes and hence inseparable from daily life.'*⁶ Furthermore, metaphors add to the multi-layeredness of place distinctive connotations which, although rendering our understanding of it more difficult, also allow us to 'walk through' the variety of 'experiential and conceptual landscapes' to grasp some 'partial' and 'opaque' meaning that we ourselves and 'other people' may give to place.⁷

I wonder how all these various facets of 'place', which seem to take the form of a 'spatial puzzle' (or 'collage'), interact and/or overlap in the changing creation and re-creation of the practices of everyday life? And, vice versa, to what extent our everyday life 'constructs' such complicated 'spatial puzzles'? How can we analyse, theoretically, the concept of place?

Agnew has pointed out three major and interwoven elements in the conceptualisation of place:

locale, the settings in which social relations are constituted (these can be informal or institutional); location, the geographical area encompassing the settings for social interaction as defined by social and economic processes operating at a wider scale; and a sense of place, the local 'structure of feeling' (Agnew 1987: 28).

Agnew continues by saying that these three elements have often been considered separately according to various scholars' concerns.

⁴ See Harvey (1993: 4).

⁵ See Warren (1993).

⁶ Warren (1993: 173) refers to the 'landscapes of leisure and entertainment.' I have employed the same quotation for the 'landscapes of war and death' which, through mass-media, not to mention political and economic factors, are inseparable from our daily life.

⁷ *'We talk about the place of art in social life, the place of women in society, our place in the cosmos, and we internalize such notions psychologically in terms of knowing our place, or feeling we have a place in the affection or esteem of others. We express norms by putting people, events and things in their proper place and seek to subvert norms by struggling to define a new place from which the oppressed can freely speak'* (Harvey 1993: 4). See also Salmond (1982). In addition to this, we also talk of 'dislocating places,' of 'placelessness,' of the 'homeless condition' of contemporary people, and one's place in society and in the order of things.

Before trying to see the interrelation between the above elements, however, it seems necessary to highlight some of their features separately in order to detect whether they suffice to explore the multi-faceted concept of place. I will also introduce a further element in the understanding of the significance of place: its relationship with community and identity. I will speculate on these elements by sketching four *theoretical trajectories*, which are only meant to be 'working devices' whose usefulness will have to be re-assessed during fieldwork.

• THEORETICAL TRAJECTORY 1

Locale, territory and locality

The term 'locale' was introduced by Giddens as part of his 'structuration theory'.⁸ Heavily relying on Hägerstrand's time-geography⁹, Giddens, at the same time, criticizes the latter for too great an emphasis on integrating temporality into social theory and not subjecting *'the notion of place or location to a close conceptual scrutiny'* (Giddens 1993: 118). The term 'place,' in fact, *'cannot be used in social theory simply to designate "point in space," any more than we can speak of points in time as a succession of "nows"'* (ibid. 1993: 118). Giddens, thus, proposes the concepts of *locale, co-presence and presence availability 'as involved in the relations between social and system integration'*¹⁰ (Giddens 1993: 118). According to him,

locales refer to the use of space to provide the settings of interaction, the settings of interaction in turn being essential to specifying its contextuality (Giddens 1993: 118).

Physical properties determine the various locales, but cannot be used as the only way to describe these settings of interaction. It is the agent who gives meaning to these properties *'in*

⁸ 'Giddens' notion of structuration suggests how the flow of human agency "binds" time and space. The social interactions involved in this are integrative. **Social** integration involves individual actors who are "co-present" in time and space, while **system** integration involves relations between actors, groups and collectivities outside conditions of "co-presence." In both cases interactions are situated in time and space, and this setting furnishes the resources on which the actors draw in their interaction. It is this context which Giddens labels "locale" ' (Johnston et al. 1994: 335).

My references for the understanding of Giddens' concept of 'locale' are mainly drawn from his *The constitution of society* (1993).

⁹ See, for example, Giddens (1993: 110-116). For a good summary of Hägerstrand's time-geography, consult Pred, A. 1977. The choreography of existence: comments on Hägerstrand's time-geography and its usefulness. *Economic Geography* 53, 207-21.

¹⁰ For the difference between social and system integration see note above.

a chronic way... in the constitution of encounters across space and time' (Giddens 1993: 118-19).

The notion of 'co-presence' involves 'what Goffman calls "the full conditions of co-presence" (which) are found whenever agents "sense that they are close enough to be perceived in whatever they are doing, including their experiencing of others, and close enough to be perceived in this sensing of being perceived"' (Giddens 1993: 67-8). The notion of 'presence-availability' stresses that 'the "being together" of co-presence demands means whereby actors are able to "come together"' (Giddens 1993: 123). Giddens also points out that the era of electronic communication can make co-presence available through, for example, the telephone (Giddens 1993: 68).

Giddens' notion of locale, co-presence and presence-availability may be useful in an anthropological study of place, given the particular interests that social anthropology posits (or should posit!) for cultural variations in the ascription of meaning to place as locale and to the dialectical interaction between 'presence-absence' in a specific social context. I will now extend the discussion by focusing on a few critical observations on Giddens' approach to locale.¹¹

Three responses to Giddens' concept of locale

1. Place has long had the sense of a 'setting of interaction' and that 'in substituting "locale" for "place" there is a danger of missing out the aspect of place captured by location' (Agnew 1987: 26). As Pred puts it, place is not only a representation of human production, it is also, and more importantly, the result of a continuing process which 'contributes to history in a specific context through the creation and utilisation of a physical setting' (Pred 1984: 279).

Giddens fails to stress the complexity of the hierarchical nesting of locales (Soja 1989: 149) and the way they are constructed and re-constructed in everyday life. This is linked to what may be described as the 'nodality of social life,' meaning the 'the socio-spatial clustering or agglomeration of activities around identifiable geographical centres or nodes' (Soja 1989: 149).

An anthropology of place should not merely focus on detecting how this 'nodality of social life' creates 'peripheralness' - the geographical diminution in nodality - which exists in every locale and is controlled by 'power' at any level¹², but should further focus on the style in which, and the circumstances under which this 'nodality' is imagined and interpreted, for example, by 'border inhabitants' (Gupta & Ferguson 1992: 7) or people in diaspora. It should also put an emphasis on analysing the extent to which the changing of socio-political-economic conditions

¹¹ See Giddens, *The constitution of society*, esp. ch. 3.

¹² See Soja (1989: 147-50).

can 'dislocate' nodalities in social life and whether - and in what ways - people's senses of their place are affected.

2. The second observation regards the wider context of structuration theory which emphasises habitual action and the unintended consequences of our actions. Entrikin has pointed out that *'the symbolic context and the active agent as an interpreter of that context is mentioned but rarely developed'* (Entrikin 1991: 23). The meaning that agents give to a place is wider than the context of social interaction and is produced by a complex and sophisticated interrelation of every aspect of the individual and collective life of a given 'community' living in a specific 'place.' Pred stresses that

nobody identifiable with the structuration perspective really has succeeded in conceptualizing the means by which the everyday shaping and reproduction of self and society come to be expressed as specific structure-influenced and structure-influencing practices occurring at particular locations in time and space (Pred 1984: 281).

I share Pred's indictment of structuration theory's failure to examine the way specific practices in time-space can simultaneously *'be rooted in past time-space situations and serve as the potential roots of future time-space situations'* (Pred 1984: 281). Place, thus, is a contingent, historical and, I would add, ongoing process whereby reproduction of social and cultural forms, the formation of biographies,¹³ and the transformation of nature intermesh to a considerable degree.

3. It seems that Giddens does not use concepts such as **territory**¹⁴ - which may implicitly involve notions such as sovereignty, property, discipline, surveillance and jurisdiction¹⁵ - at a local level.

¹³ Pred suggests that the limitation of structuration theory may be overcome by integrating in it elements of time-geography. *'Such an integration rests on the concept of "path" and "project," the two fundamental building blocks of the time-geography language. According to the path concept each of the actions and the events consecutively making up the existence of an individual has both spatial and temporal attributes. Consequently, the biography of a person can be conceptualized as a continuous path through time-space, subject to various types of constraint. The "biographies" of other living creatures, natural phenomena, and humanly made objects can also be conceptualized in the same manner. A project consists of the entire series of tasks necessary to complete any intention-inspired or goal-oriented behavior'* (Pred 1984: 281).

¹⁴ One of the most recent definitions of 'territory' has been put forward by Casimir & Rao (1992). They write that *'human territorial behaviour is a cognitive and behaviourally flexible system which aims at optimising the individual's and hence often also a group access to temporarily or permanently localised resources, which satisfy either basic and universal or culture-specific needs and wants, or both, while simultaneously minimising the probability of conflicts over them'* (Casimir & Rao 1992: 20).

¹⁵ See Soja (1989: 150). For 'territory' see also Sack (1986). Soja, however, points out that neither his approach nor Sack's 'provide a satisfactory social ontology of territoriality' (Soja 1989: 150, note 9).

While he refers, as one of his locales, to the *'territorially demarcated areas occupied by nation-states'* (Giddens 1993: 118), Giddens does not seem to examine 'territory' and its connotations in the social practices of everyday life. For the concept of time, on the contrary, he posits an interrelation between a) the *durée* of day-to-day experience: 'reversible time'; b) the life span of the individual: 'irreversible time'; c) and the *longue durée* of institutions: 'reversible time' (Giddens 1993: 34-5).

An anthropological analysis of the concept of place as territory may focus on a) the contrasts, which often exist, between the boundaries created by territorially defined nation-states and the *'geographical territories that cultures and societies are believed to map onto'* (Gupta & Ferguson 1992: 7); b) the flexibility of boundaries (both real and imagined) which are continually constructed, through tensions and alliances, within and among communities; c) the way people 'imagine' the after-life as multi-levelled and hierarchical territories, and the imagined degree of juxtaposition or felt co-presence availability between the 'sensible' world and the 'supernatural' world (the case of Chinese religion(s) is a suitable one for this analysis).

Even the concept of **locality** which *'can be defined as particular types of enduring locales stabilised socially and spatially through the clustered settlement of primary activity sites and the establishment of propinquitous territorial community'* (Soja 1989: 151) does not appear in Giddens's vocabulary. The contributions that an anthropology of place can make to the study of place as locality may entail an assessment of whether contrasts between natural and built environments set in motion a process of 'changing senses of place' for the people living in a specific area. Another point which seems to be missing from Giddens' concept of locale is the role that urbanisation, and the associated phenomenon of migration and social mobility, have played in the hierarchical nesting of places and in individual and collective multiple senses of identity and belonging.

• THEORETICAL TRAJECTORY 2

Location

In the previous part, the concept of location has already emerged as a necessary condition for the understanding of place. Locales, as Agnew says, *'could be anywhere. However they are not. They are located according to the demands of a spatially extensive division of labour and global system of material production and distribution'* (Agnew 1987: 27). Thus location, as *'the geographical area encompassing the settings for social interaction'* (Agnew 1987: 28), seems to be defined by social, economic and political factors that determine processes of locating, dis-locating and re-locating the settings for social interaction in the global system. In other words, location loses its 'fixity' and becomes a 'mobile' location. An example of this may be the State's imposed division of its territory into locations as a factor of administrative control (and

surveillance). According to the 'flow of capital,' these locations may be re-arranged and re-interlinked, thus tending to be functional to the State's interests (or to those of a privileged class).

The concept of a 'mobile' location is in dialectical opposition with location as 'locution,' the voice of the 'homeless' and the 'oppressed' looking for a physical location and a territorial expression, searching for a place and a sense of place. With respect to this, the construction of an anthropology more based 'on the ground,' listening to and attempting to represent different 'voices' will probably question, for example, the postmodernist thinking that *'the discursive construction of identity and "places" in the social order... has little or nothing to do, except coincidentally, with physical location or territorial expression'*¹⁶ (Harvey 1993: 16).

• THEORETICAL TRAJECTORY 3

Sense of place

'Sense of place,' as the local 'structure of feeling'¹⁷ or the *'felt sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time'*,¹⁸ refers to the personal or collective, relatively subjective and, to a certain degree, intimate experiences of place(s) that people 'sense' in the practices of everyday life. It contains two distinct but interrelated perspectives: the character intrinsic to place itself and the attachments that people have to a place (Johnston et al. 1994: 548).

In the first sense, certain places are regarded as distinctive or memorable through their unique physical characteristics or 'imagability', or through their association with significant events, real or mythical. ... In the second sense, in everyday life individuals and communities develop deep attachments to places through experience, memory and intention. The most obvious such attachments are to 'home,' where above all one feels 'in place.' Commonly, people give physical expression to their collective attachments to place through construction of symbolic structures (churches, monuments, etc.) that increase its more general distinctiveness (Johnston et al. 1994: 549).

¹⁶ Harvey also writes that postmodernism, which *'appears to be the preoccupation of a segment of the privileged class,... is hardly of concern to trade unionists, social workers, health providers, the unemployed or the homeless'* (Harvey 1993: 25).

¹⁷ This phrase has been introduced by Williams, R. 1977. *Marxism and literature*. Oxford: University Press. Quoted in Agnew (1993: 263).

¹⁸ Pred, A. 1983. Structuration and place: on the becoming of sense of place and structure of feeling. *Journal for the theory of social behavior* 13, 45-68 (the reference is on p. 58). Quoted in Agnew (1993: 263).

Thus, places are socially constructed both individually and collectively. Their 'distinctiveness' is the product of a complex time-deepened and memory-qualified association of the physical (visible) and of a 'sense' which is given to places through the experience and intentionality of the agent(s). This, however, may vary as social, community, and individual conditions change.

In this constant and ongoing process, the agent(s) develops a sense of multiple and, to some extent, hierarchical attachments. Thus, family, community, village, neighbourhood, the wider society, the nation, the world, etc., all express and are partly constitutive of attachments at different levels; *'home, work, school, church and so on form nodes around which human activities circulate and which in toto can create a sense of place'* (Agnew 1987: 28). Furthermore, attachments to places *'may come simply with familiarity at ease, with the assurance of nurture and security, with the memory of sounds and smell, of communal activities and homely pleasures accumulated over time'* (Tuan 1977: 159).

The Chinese attachment to one's place of origin apparently entails a sense of being attached to one's land, ancestors, family and community. This 'sense' crosses the boundary of Taiwan and reaches the historical origin in Southern *Fujian* from where the first major process of migration started towards Taiwan, from the seventeenth century onwards. This attachment is profoundly expressed in the creation and re-creation of rituals whose 'Spirits' have clear territorial connotations. The large number of Taiwanese 'going back' to *Fujian* shows that the Chinese senses of 'home,' 'homeland,' and 'community of origin,' in other words, the place of origin, cannot be ignored in the attempt to construct an anthropology of place in Taiwan.

Furthermore, physical construction of symbolic structures, apart from increasing a more general distinctiveness of place, also adds to people's sense of 'identity' a sense of continuity and belonging to a place, a sense of relative 'fixtures' in the flux of modern life. In this regard, the study of temples in Taiwan, as expressive and constitutive of a sense of community and identity, is a further element in an anthropological analysis of the changing Chinese senses of place.

• THEORETICAL TRAJECTORY 4

Some notes on the relationship between community and identity

Ronald Blythe in his study of the village of Akenfield in East Anglia writes,

the villager who has never moved away from his birthplace... retains the unique mark of his particular village. If a man says he comes from Akenfield he knows that he is telling someone from another part of the neighbourhood a good deal more than this. Anything from his appearance to his politics could be involved (Blythe 1969: 17-18).

Blythe's Akenfield villager is deeply rooted in his village from which he has never moved away. His sense of place has constantly developed in a particular location. His social interactions are localised in Akenfield, which is his place-bound community; this gives him the 'unique mark' of his place-bound identity.

The Akenfield villager's encounter with someone from another part of the neighbourhood emphasizes both a '*sense of a primacy of belonging*' (Cohen 1985: 15) and the boundary - and the uniqueness - which exists between Akenfield and the rest of the world. The '*sense of a primacy of belonging*' has been clearly pointed out by Ronald Dore in his description of a Japanese village he studied for twenty-five years, '*if you live in Shinohata, the 'outside world' begins three hundred yards down the road...*'¹⁹

As Cohen stresses, community²⁰ is an entity in between kinship relations and the abstracted entity called society, '*it is the arena in which people acquire their most fundamental and most substantial experience of social life outside the confine of the home*' (Cohen 1985: 15). It is by crossing the boundary between home and community, between kinship and non-kinship, that people begin to construct a sense of identity and of belonging to a specific community. This process of construction of a sense of identity continues, for '*looking outwards across the boundary, people construct what they see in terms of their own stereotypes*' (Cohen 1985: 109), reflecting on their own individual and collective self. The definition of one's own identity, both personal and collective, is generated through the encounter with others. There is a dialectical process which embraces the real and the symbolic and finds its roots in the 'memory of the

¹⁹ The quotation is taken from Cohen (1985: 15). Cohen refers to Dore's 1978. *Shinohata: a portrait of a Japanese village*. New York: Pantheon, p. 60.

²⁰ The concept of community has a wide range of meanings in anthropology and sociology and has long been disputed in the social sciences. The aim of this section is to point out some elements which may be useful for an understanding of place and senses of place. However, a few important references to the study of community in anthropology and sociology have to be presented in order to pinpoint the complexity and, to some extent, the conceptual confusion in the study of community and place.

In Tonnies' terms (1887; Engl. transl., New York, 1955. *Community and association*.) the concept of *Gemeinschaft* refers to communities as a particular form of association where kinship and moral bonds dominate and a relatively traditional social order is produced. Thus, this term has been used to refer to locality-based folk communities. *Gemeinschaft* contrasts with *Gesellschaft*, a social order characterized by impersonal contractual relationships, as in urban industrial society.

The study of place in social science has been especially linked to the concept of *Gemeinschaft*. This seems to have created confusion between place and community. Is it possible to separate the concept of community as 'a morally-valued way of life' from community as 'the constituting of social relations in a discrete geographical setting'? Agnew (see Entrikin 1991: 60-1) believes that the distinction is fundamental. Entrikin answers by saying that although the distinction offers '*certain theoretical advantages to the geographers, it has the disadvantage of overlooking the role that cultural interpretations of a morally valued way of life play in the constitution of social relations. Such evaluations are embedded in the narratives of individuals and groups and are lost when culture is reduced to habitual or instrumental action*' (Entrikin 1991: 61). Furthermore, Tonnies' *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* has influenced Redfield's formulation of the folk-urban continuum, by which is meant '*a continuous gradation of ways of life between the two poles of truly rural community and truly urban society*' (Johnston et al. 1994: 540). Redfield's formulation does not take into account the interrelationship between the rural and the urban as parts of a single politico-economic social system and, therefore, it does not seem a suitable 'tool' for a study of community. The more recent focus on human agency and structure in the construction of communities has probably shed more light on such a complex topic.

past' often represented in religious rituals. These occupy a '*prominent place in the repertoire of symbolic devices through which community boundaries are affirmed and reinforced*' (Cohen 1985: 50) and make some social interactions more 'memorable' than others.

Another element which contributes to an understanding of the relationship between community and identity is that of a 'sense of rootedness.'

It has been written that '*to be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define.*'²¹ Rootedness implies a sense of being 'in place', of being 'rooted', both physically and symbolically. It refers to one's connection with, and feeling of, belonging to a 'place', especially the place where one is born and brought up. It is that 'somewhere' that one knows and where one feels 'at home', thus referring to the physical and existential qualities of place. It can be experienced at different levels: my place, your place, family, community, neighbourhood, village, city, country, the world. These levels, however, overlap and interrelate to a large degree and in different ways in the interpretation of one's life. Rootedness, in the sense of the authenticity of the experience of place, becomes, in Heidegger's terms 'the locale of the truth of Being', the art of 'dwelling' as '*the capacity to achieve a spiritual unity between humans and things*' (quoted in Harvey 1993: 11).

These are all elements which, ideally, contribute to the construction of individual and collective senses of community and identity, and seem to refer to a community which is primarily based on co-presence and presence availability. In reality, one can speculate on what senses of community and identity can be constructed in a highly industrialised and capitalist world. More specifically, to what extent have urbanization and migration at all levels affected our senses of community and identity? If we take rootedness as referring to one's homeland, what sense of identity can be experienced by the exiled and by those in diaspora?

I believe these questions cannot be answered on a theoretical level - at least not alone - as repercussions will be specific to particular social settings and cultural conceptions. My aim, in fact, is to discuss and assess them during fieldwork, in the context of Taiwan's radical and rapid 'transformation' in the last few decades. It may, however, be worthwhile to speculate on the following remarks:

a) The sense of belonging to a community, and the sense of identity which stems from it, can be consciously 'affirmed and reinforced' when they are threatened.²² This may be one of the reasons why '*the elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather than less*

²¹ Weil, S. 1955. *The need for roots*. Boston: Beacon Press, p. 53. Quoted in Relph (1976: 38).

²² Entrikin writes that '*modern urban life has been described as destructive of place-based community and has been characterized in terms of individualism, isolation and alienation*' (Entrikin 1991: 63). However, the need, attraction and the value of ideal place-based social relations in modern urban settings should not be undermined. In addition to this, I wonder whether the rural village has not undergone the same process as the modern urban setting and that a certain form of alienation and its need for ideal place-based social relations may be extended to rural areas as well.

important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement and communication' (Harvey 1993: 4).

The 'need to delimit the bounds of similarity', that Durkheim²³ thought would 'be swept away by the political and economic logic of large-scale systems of production' (Cohen 1985: 110) seems to have become stronger in particular contexts, thus questioning the logic of universalism and, more recently, modernization and globalization. In fact,

old divisions and loyalties based around class and geographical community may have been undermined by the globalization of markets, communications networks, networks of power and capital flows: but in their place - paradoxically both as a resistance to, and at the same time a product of these global forces - we see the development of new communities of interest and belief (Carter et al. 1993: ix).

In other words, the attempt to crystallise the entire world as a single place²⁴ seems to contrast with the 'need to be "at home" in the new and disorienting global space' (Morley & Robins 1993: 5). As Michael Rustin puts it, 'there is an increasingly felt need for **some expressive relationship to the past and for attachment to particular territorial locations as nodes of association and continuity, bounding cultures and communities.**'²⁵

The case of rural and urban Taiwan will show that, despite the phenomenon of globalization (and probably also because of this), local and territorial cultural expressions of different communities have been reinforced, even if subject to some modification.

b) The 'roots' image seems to emphasise what may be called a fixed 'identity'. The attempt to explore the 'process of identification' appears to be a more suitable approach towards speculating on 'sense(s) of identity' and 'sense(s) of place'. In other words, *'identity is formed on the move... such a journey is open and incomplete, it involves a continual fabulation, an invention, a construction, in which there is no fixed identity or final destination'* (Chambers 1994: 25).

²³ Cooke highlights that community was 'a concept developed in theoretical accounts of the important transition from - depending on the author - feudalism to capitalism, prerational or premodern society to rational modernity, or societies characterized by mechanical solidarity to those displaying organic solidarity. In the work of Marx, Weber and Durkheim, responsible respectively for situating community within those dualities, one thing they agree upon is that the onset of competitive capitalism, modern rational society, or what is often called simply 'industrialism' destroyed key social ties' (Cooke 1990: 3-4).

²⁴ The phrase is taken from Roland Robertson 1987. Globalization and societal modernization: a note on Japan and Japanese religion. *Sociological Analysis* 47, 35-43; *ibid.* 1987. Globalization Theory and civilizational analysis. *Comparative Civilizations Review* 17, 20-30. Quoted in King (1991: 11).

²⁵ Michael Rustin 1987. Place and time in socialist theory. *Radical Philosophy* 47, 33-4. Quoted in Morley & Robins (1993: 5).

c) The process of urbanization and migration has often meant a 'displacement' of one's own 'centre', both physically and ontologically. This may have created a sense of 'fragmentation' in the everyday life of people and communities and of multiple attachments and identities. Living in the built environment of cities may have produced various degrees of 'ontological insecurity' (Giddens 1993). Therefore, *'unlike the attachment to place in a pre-modern culture, modern attachments cannot be so easily mapped on to a larger cultural grid. Nor may they be seen as a microcosm of one's full cultural identity. They simply contribute a part to the puzzle'* (Entrikin 1991: 56).

d) Thornton and Ramphela (1989), analysing the concept and practice of community in South Africa, point out that *'the contemporary sense of political community derives primarily from the medieval Christian religious communities'*²⁶ (Thornton & Ramphela 1989: 84) which was secularised and employed in the restructuring of Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Communities, as the result of complex political factors, are believed in, desired and made in a variety of ways according to localised and historical social factors.

The construction of 'imagined' communities (Anderson 1991), which may also take the form of political struggle and resistance, *'come to be attached to imagined places, as displaced peoples cluster around remembered or imagined homelands, places, or communities in a world that seems increasingly to deny such firm territorialized anchors in their actuality'* (Gupta & Ferguson 1992: 10-1). What we have to detect is the *'style in which they are imagined'*²⁷ (Anderson 1991: 6).

²⁶ See also Reynolds, S. 1992 [1984]. *Kingdoms and communities in western Europe 900-1300*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

²⁷ Anderson writes that *'all communities larger than the primordial village of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined'* (Anderson 1991: 6).

Some conclusions: where the trajectories intersect...

It seems that Agnew's suggestion that analysis should be formed in terms of the tripartite differentiation of locale, location, and sense of place, as interwoven elements in the concept of place, is not sufficient for the exploration of the multi-faceted notion of place. 'Territory', 'locality' and the 'relationship between community and identity' add to the concept of place further dimensions which should not be ignored. I have used the term ***theoretical trajectories*** to emphasize the fact that it is the multiple intersections 'in space and time' (= in place) of theoretically distinct concepts, such as locale, location, sense of place, territory, locality, community and identity, which make the notion of place less 'contestable'.²⁸ The notion of place is also, potentially, a significant perspective, from which social anthropology - and other disciplines - can attempt to study societies and their transformation, both in time and space.

What I propose to consider is that the understanding and analysis of people's ***senses of place*** (I imply that there is more than one sense!) in the practice of everyday life and in relation to the previous sketched *theoretical trajectories* may be a useful 'theoretical tool' for understanding the context of Taiwan's radical and rapid transformation over the last few decades, and people's strategic adaptation to these changes. '*Through experience, memory and intention*' (Johnston et al. 1994: 549), people's various degrees of, and multiple attachments to place (such as family, community, rural village, urban neighbourhood, temple, nation, homeland, school, place-work, etc.) may indicate the extent to which these intersect and overlap and create tensions within and among communities. It may indicate whether the 'imagined' boundaries of a community contrast (or otherwise) with the administrative (or other) boundaries of the State or the wider society. It may also show the way social transformations are occurring, social interactions and sense of identity are changing, and the style in which communities are 'imagined' (Anderson 1991: 6).

Methodologically, I would suggest that narratives of people and places (Entrikin 1991: 14-5. 26; Pred 1984) best capture people's various degrees of, and multiple attachments to, place through time and space. As de Certeau has written,

in modern Athens, the vehicle of mass transportation are called metaphorai. To go to work or come home, one takes a 'metaphor' - a bus or a train. Stories could also take this noble name: every day, they traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them...

These proliferating metaphors - sayings and stories (that) organize places through the displacements they 'describe' (as a mobile point 'describes' a curve)...

(de Certeau 1984: 115-16).

²⁸ See above: *The significance and complexity of the study of place: an introduction.*

Narratives as 'metaphorai' involve the temporal dimension of people's senses of place which indicate the way these are 'imagined' in the past, present and future. Furthermore, focusing on narratives, my intention is to understand how people in Taiwan make, re-make and interpret their 'local histories' and how they construe their communities in the wider 'imagined community of the *nation*.'²⁹ Through narratives, specific 'cultural traditions and parameters' are asserted and re-asserted, created and re-created and, indeed, retain a sense of significance and some kind of vitality both for people and places.³⁰

²⁹ The question of whether Taiwan is considered to be a nation is itself a veritable bone of contention, the ramifications of which I will explore during fieldwork.

³⁰ In this regard, one may explore the extent to which 'stories' of people and places have 'magical power' (*ling*) in the same way that Chinese deities have. Does the 'magical power' of stories 'wax and wane' as the 'magical power' of Chinese deities? It will be also useful to explore the extent to which living in a specific rural or urban place may cause a 'sense of alienation.'

Section One

Telling stories about the authority of place

Chapter one:

大同區 *Datong district*

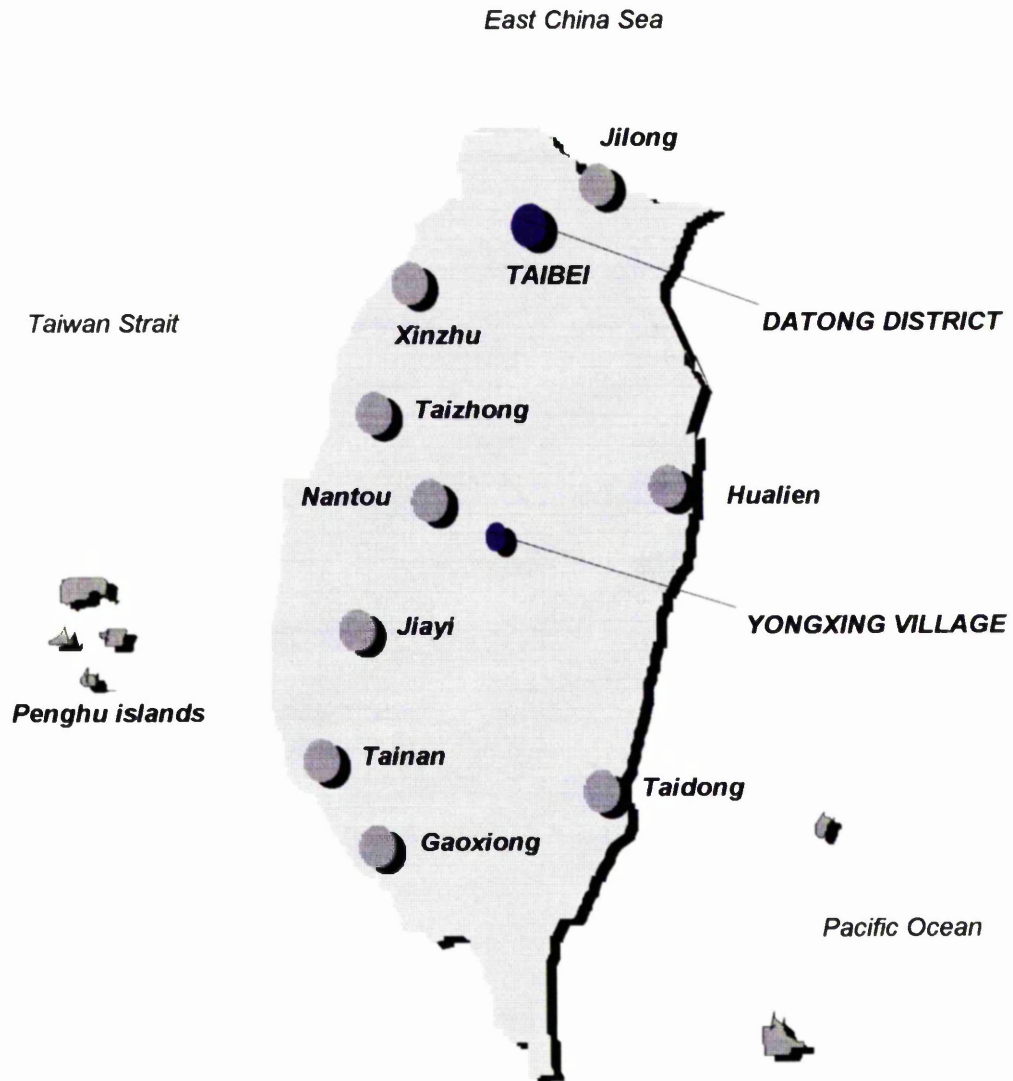
Chapter two:

永興社區 *Yongxing village*

Chapter three:

***Writing places and the place of writing:
reflecting back on writing, fieldwork and theory***

M1. Map of Taiwan



Chapter One

大同區

Datong district

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Mapping territories: Datong district and its Tudi Gong temples

1.3 'Siting' and 'sighting' Tudi Gong temples in Datong district

Yanping route

Chongqing route

Chengde route

Ninth Door route

1.1 Introduction

My first encounter with and basic knowledge of *Datong* district 大同區 occurred by visiting, with Mr. Gao 高,¹ several *Tudi Gong* temples 土地公廟 in its two main localities: *Dadaocheng* 大稻埕 and *Dalongtong* 大龍峒. We did it mainly by walking. From the outset my 'progress' was literally pedestrian, a process of 'finding my feet,' of learning about, traversing, and familiarising myself with places before being able, metaphorically, to run '*points*' together with translational '*descriptions*' into '*metaphorical*' telling of stories (de Certeau, above).

Subsequently, various maps and my continuous going back to the district helped me to familiarise myself with the location of the temples, their territories and the human and social geography of the district, until I was able to '*describe*' a specific temple in terms of its place, the route(s) to reach it and the people within its compass whom I met in the various sites. Maps would not be needed anymore as the temples and their locations became fixed in my memory, as they are now, in the process of writing about them.

The knowledge of my urban fieldwork site, which I chose to delimit inside the boundaries of the present *Datong* district, would become, day after day, more sophisticated. Spatial trajectories, both mine and of my raconteurs, would often interlace with temporal ones, thereby making the interconnection between the study of place(s) and the understanding of localised histories a feature which seems to have been '*dictated*,' with vernacular variations, by the sixteen *Tudi Gong* temples sited in the district.

My attempt to write a biography of each *Tudi Gong* temple in *Datong* district seems to have highlighted the polyphonic dimension already inscribed in old localities such as *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong*. In other words, the district's *Tudi Gong* temples appear to have captured the polyphonic voices of an overwhelming number of lesser known and smaller localities which in aggregate have indeed contributed to the current configuration of the district and of its two main old localities. At the same time each temple furnishes interesting insights toward understandings of the role that *Tudi Gong* plays in the Taiwanese practice of everyday life.

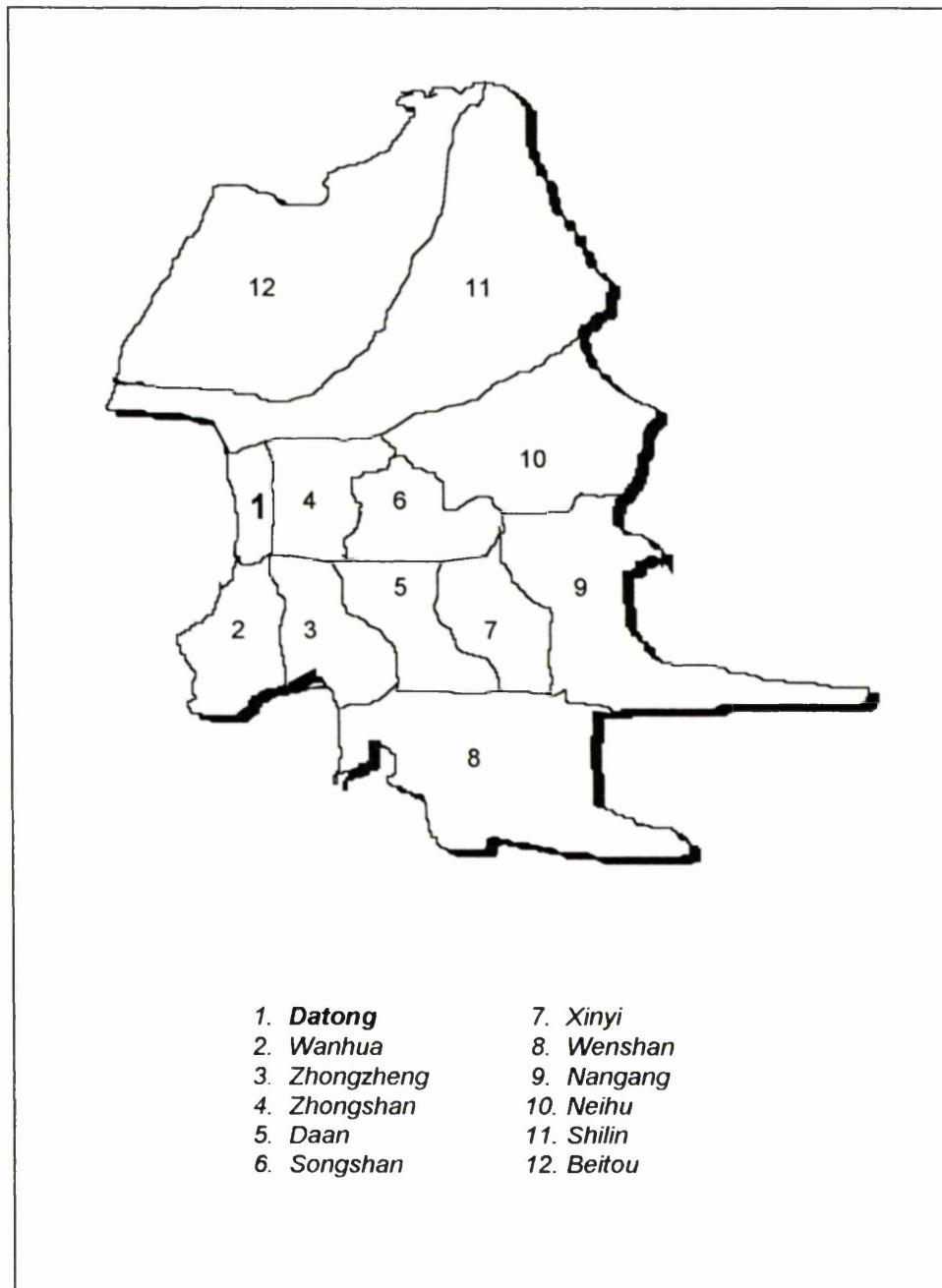
The aim of this chapter is to invite the reader to become acquainted with *Datong* district and its *Tudi Gong* temples *in the same way as I did*. In this first part, the detailed maps presented help locate the district topographically and show the position of the temples, their territories and the routes followed. In the second part each temple will be introduced and its specific

¹ My deepest thanks to Mr. Gao for his invaluable help and continuous encouragement especially during the first stage of my fieldwork in the district.

characteristics outlined. Particular attention will be given to the links that these temples have with the histories and development of the places where they are sited and which they somehow represent. It is not until the third chapter of the thesis, however, that I consider more methodological and theoretical issues arising from the ethnographic data, my fieldwork process and sites.

1.2 Mapping territories: Datong district and its Tudi Gong temples

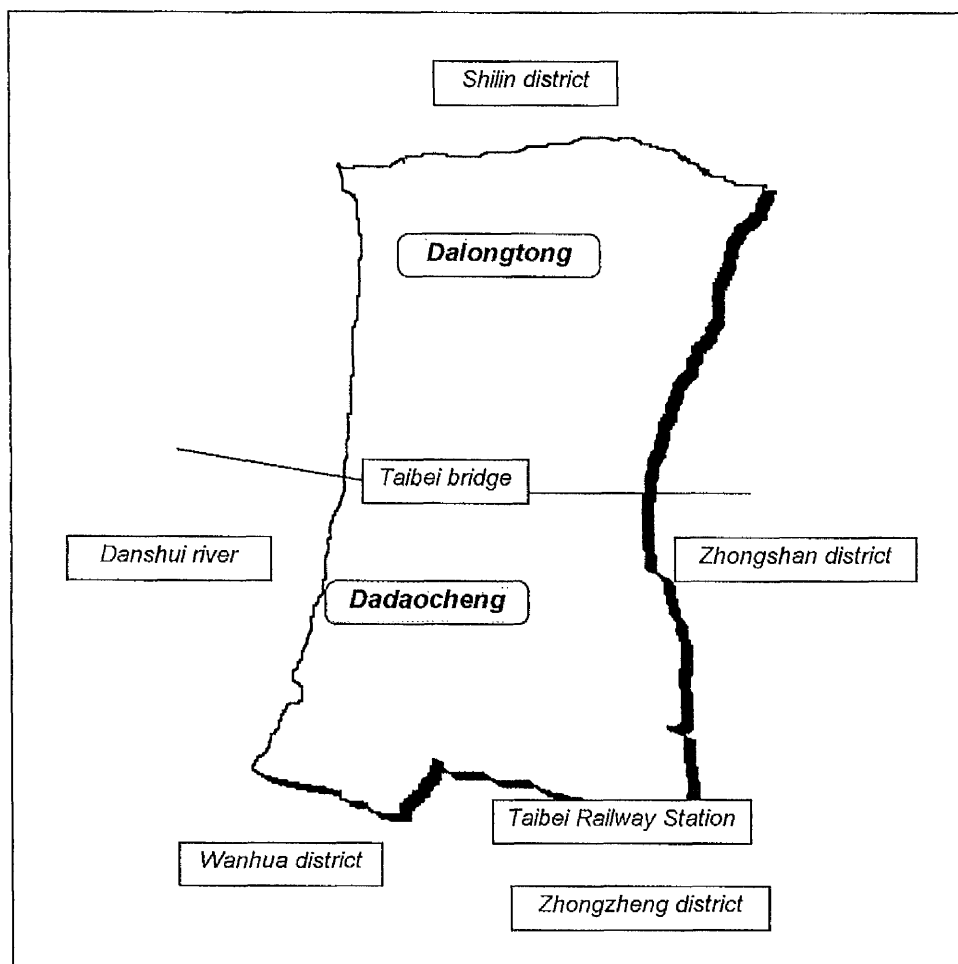
M2. Taipei city: administrative districts.



[illegible]

The current configuration of *Datong* district stands out very clearly in the map of *Taipei* city 台北市 shown on the previous page. On March the 12th 1990, the number of districts in the city was reduced from sixteen to twelve following a process of administrative restructuring. The former *Yanping* district 延平區 and *Jianzheng* district 建成區 were included in the *Datong* administrative territory, an area of five square kilometres with an official population of 152,665 people.² At present, *Datong* district's boundaries stretch from the motorway in the North to the railway station in the South (almost *Zhongxiao West Road* 忠孝西路) and from the *Danshui* river 淡水河 in the West to the railway in the East. *Datong*'s neighbouring districts are *Shilin* 士林 in the North, *Wanhua* 萬華 and *Zhongzheng* 中正 in the South and *Zhongshan* 中山 in the East. The old localities *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong* occupy the southern-central part and the northern part, respectively.

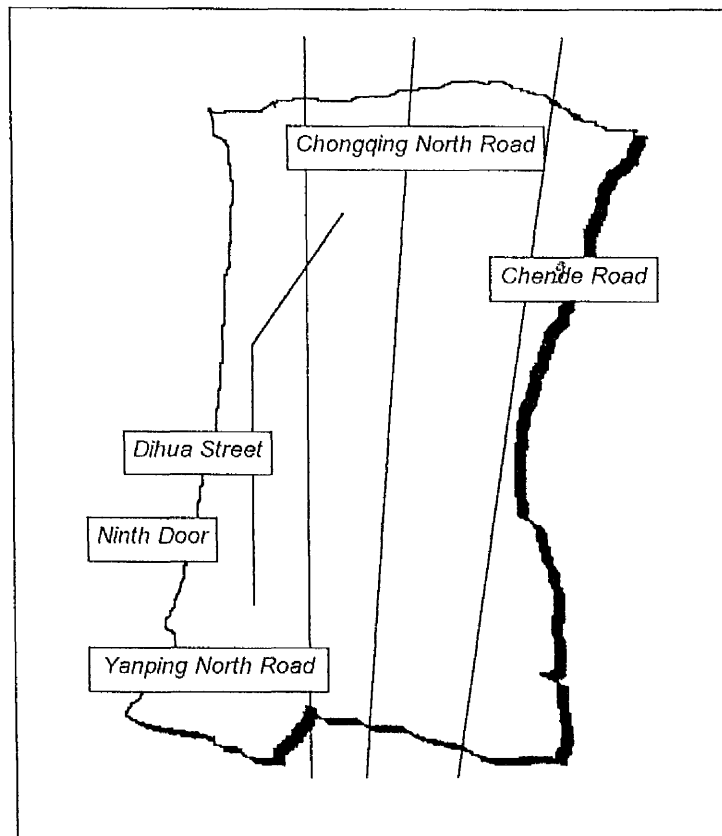
M4. Location of *Dalongtong*, *Dadaocheng* and *Datong*'s neighbouring districts



² See *Taipei Wenxian* 1990, 94, 46ss.

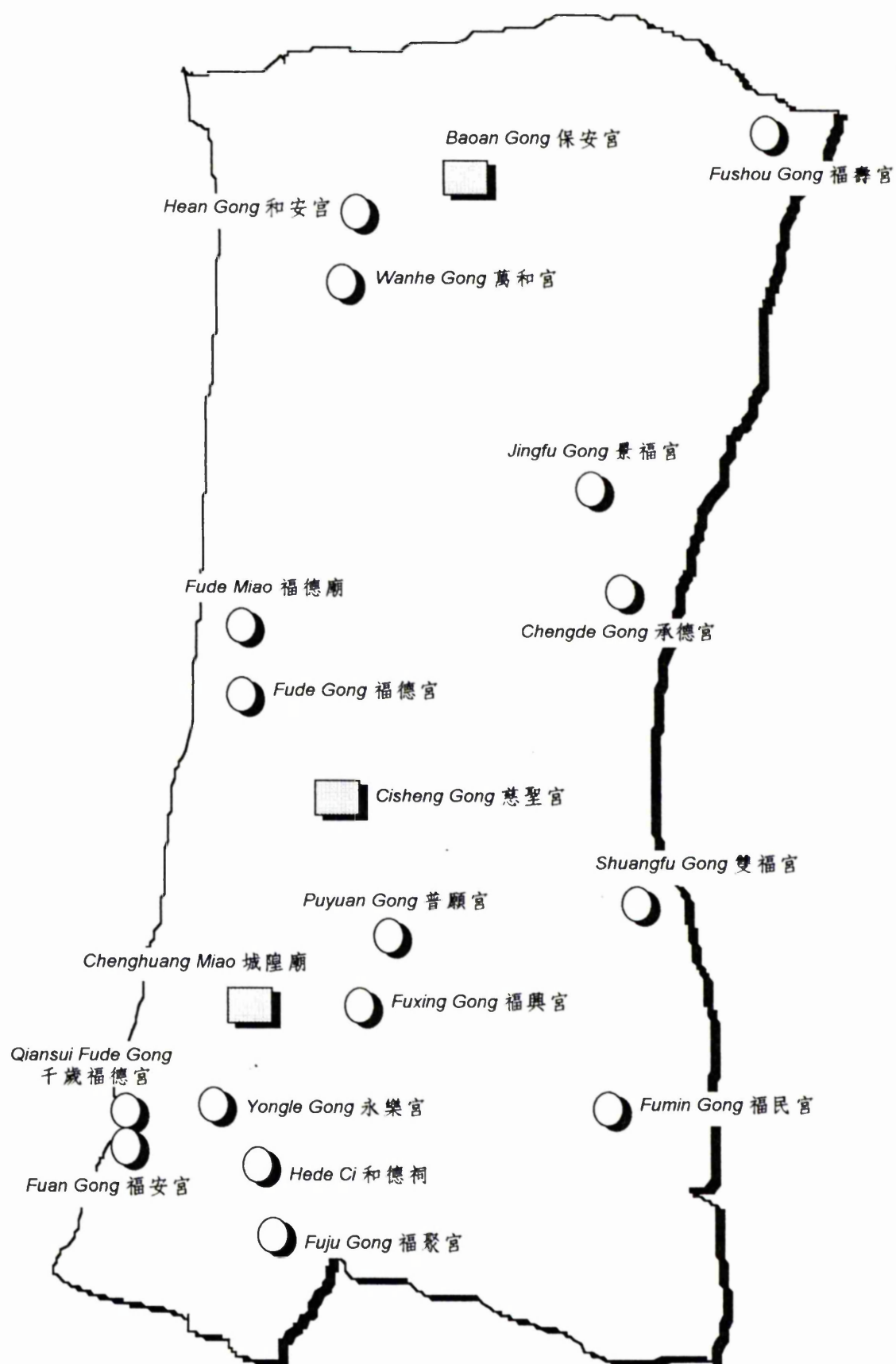
Datong district was easily accessible from the place where I was living. By bus, it would take me no more than ten minutes to go from *Hangzhou South Road* 杭州南路, Sec. 1 to *Taipei Railway Station* 台北車站 which is located south-west of *Datong*, just outside the administrative boundaries of the district. From the station I would walk to the district. Once across *Zhengzhou Road* 鄭州路, I could follow any of the three principal routes that traverse the entire district. These are the three main roads: *Yanping North Road* 延平北路, *Chongqing North Road* 重慶北路 and *Chengde Road* 承德路.

M5. Yanping route, Chongqing route, Chende route and Dihua Street

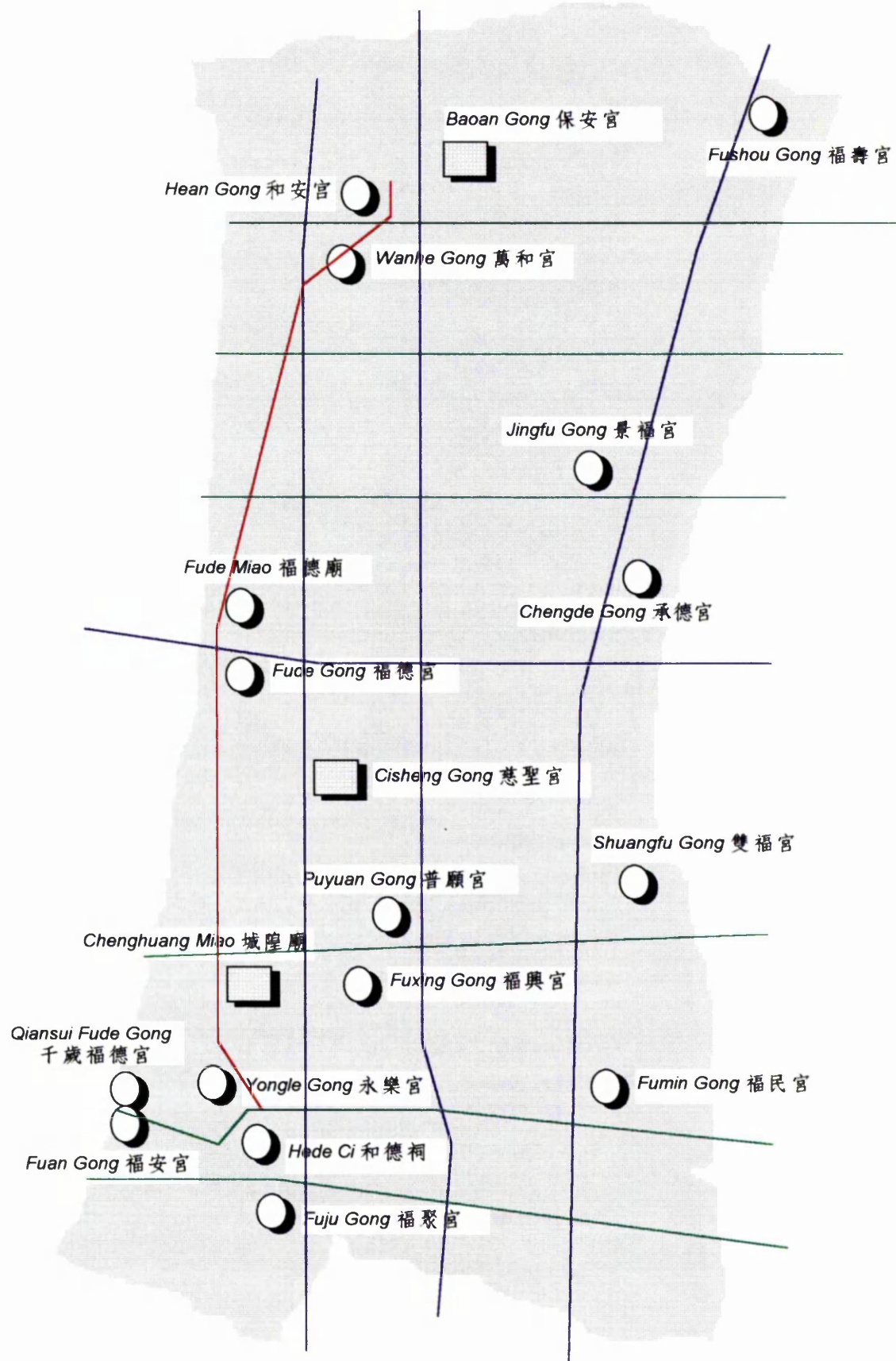


I would usually take one of these three routes to enter the district, but, once there, my paths were decided by the locations of the several *Tudi Gong* temples. Sometimes, I would also take a bus heading towards the northern part of the district. From there I would progress on foot towards the station, stopping always at some *Tudi Gong* temples. On sunny days I would often go to the *Ninth Door* 第九水門 on the *Danshui* river. In the park close to the river there are two *Tudi Gong* temples. To give the reader an approximate idea of the extent of the district, it would take me almost two hours to walk, non-stop at normal pace, from the southern boundary of the district to the northern one.

M6. Location of Tudi Gong temples in Datong district

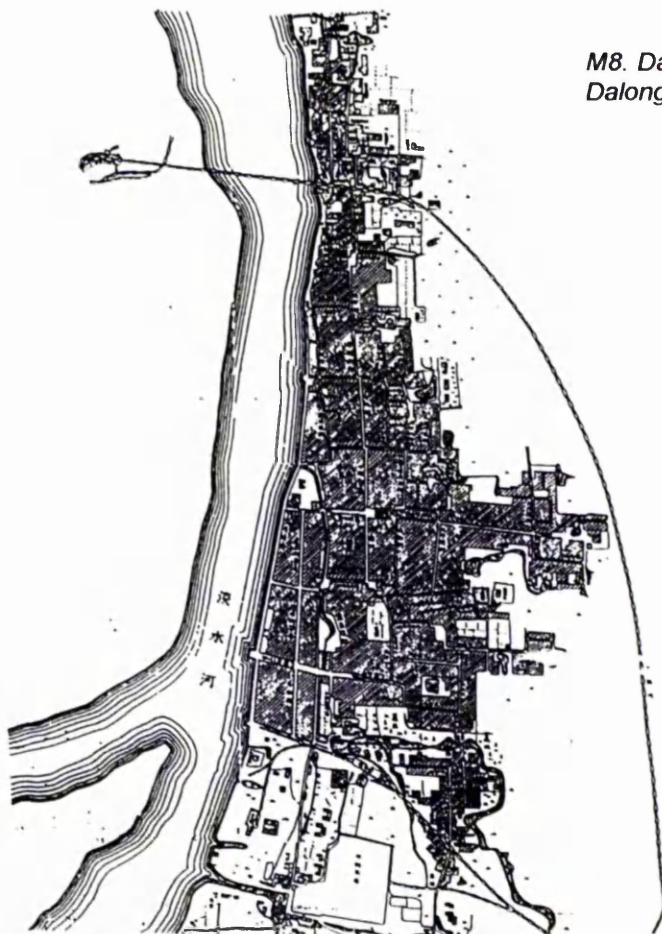


M7. Location of Tudi Gong temples in Datong district with reference to main roads



During the process of my becoming familiar with *Datong* district, the locations of the sixteen *Tudi Gong* temples and their positions in relation to the main roads struck me as very significant. Firstly, the map seems to highlight the old localities *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong* through the positioning of the various *Tudi Gong* temples. Several of my raconteurs, to whom I showed the two maps presented on the previous pages, without prompting delineated the imagined boundaries of the two old localities. However, as the area is growing and developing, the boundaries of the former *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong* were remembered with a certain degree of flexibility. Secondly, the district has developed from the river eastwards, making the areas enclosed by the *Dihua* Street 迪化街 and *Yanping* North Road, both memorable and unique in the history of *Taipei*. It appears that **'the closer to the Danshui river, the older the road and the stronger the place's memory of the past,'** I was told.

The following map³ was made by the Japanese in August 1895, three months after their occupation of Taiwan. It quite clearly delineates the old localities *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong*, from which, in the following decades, *Datong* district as well as its neighbouring districts originated.



M8. *Dadaocheng and Dalongtong: 1895 map*

³ The map is from *Taipei Wenxian* 1992, 99, 50ss.

Tudi Gong seems to function as guardian and protector of people and places. With reference to place, I started to investigate the way *Tudi Gong* temples would circumscribe their own territories and how these would interact with the administrative organisation and boundary of the current *Datong* district. It was a very difficult task, I must admit. It took me, in fact, more than two months to draw the map which I have presented on the next page.

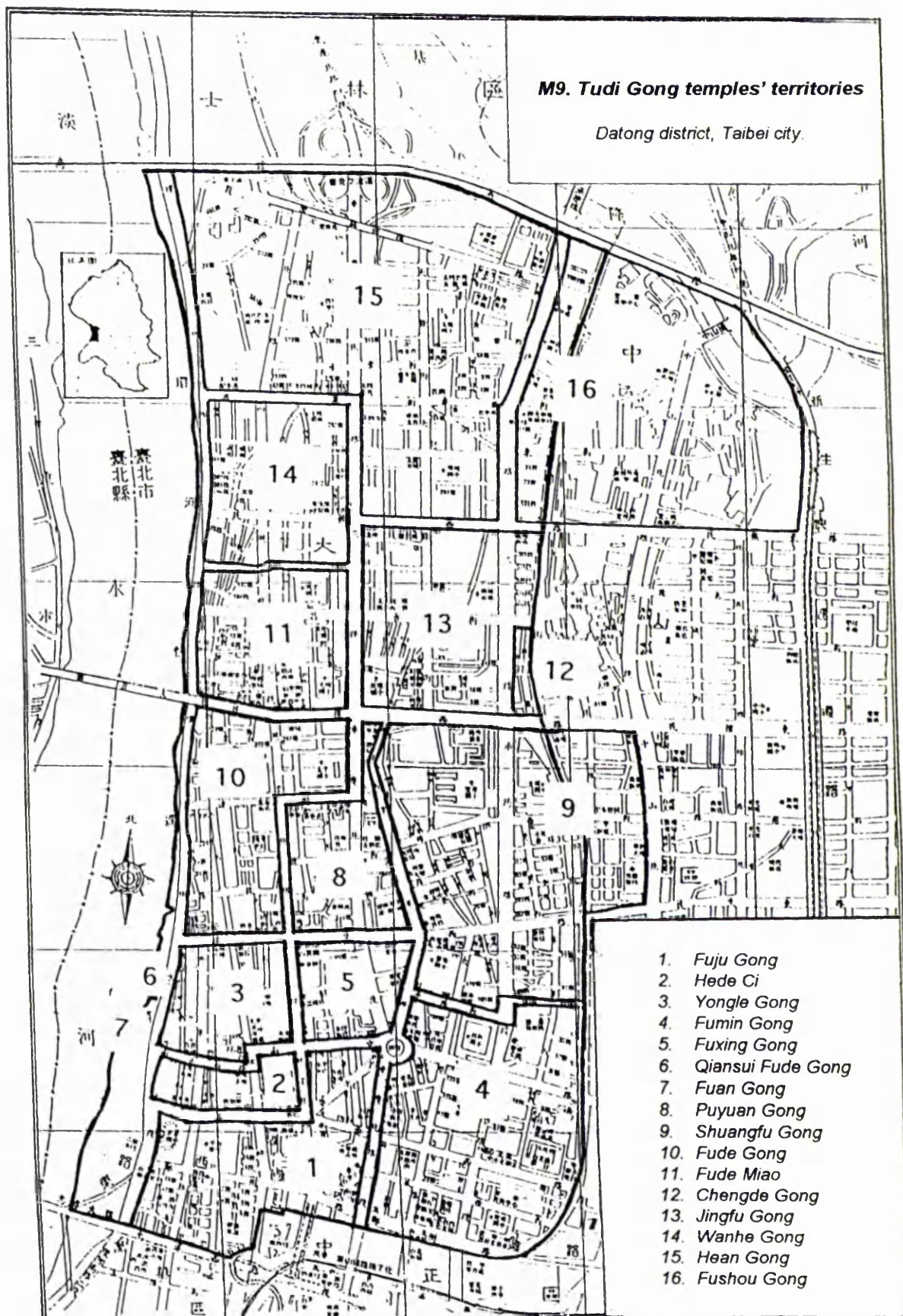
A first key point to note is that *Tudi Gong* temples territories in the district - and more generally in the city - are not drawn according to the administrative division of *li* 里 or *lin* 鄰, but according to roads. I was not able to establish when such a practice was introduced and how it was carried out during and before the Japanese occupation. The albeit scant information seems to indicate that *Tudi Gong* temples territories would have been delineated according to specific community settlements⁴ or according to the Japanese administrative territory division.⁵ It must be said that in the countryside *Tudi Gong* temples territories are configured according to *li* or *lin*. In the current *Datong* district there are twenty-six *li* and the temple territory of the *Fude Miao* 福德廟 is the only one which exactly encapsulates two administrative territories: the *Nanfang li* 南芳里 and the *Dayou Li* 大有里.

There seems to be a consistent correspondence between the boundaries of the temples sited on the margins with those of the district, with the exception of the *Fushou Gong* 福壽宮 and the *Shuangfu Gong* 雙福宮. The boundaries of these two temples' territories, in fact, extend into the neighbouring *Zhongshan* district. In addition, the *Qiansui Fude Gong* 千歲福德宮 - now partly destroyed - and the *Fuan Gong* 福安宮 located in the *Ninth-Door* park on the *Danshui* river, do not have a specific territory. They are considered as *shetuan miao* 社團廟, temples which have been established by groups of elderly people, mainly residing on the adjacent *Minsheng West Road* 民生西路, taking advantage of the park for physical exercise.

The map of the *Tudi Gong* temples' territories has been edited several times, according to subsequent information and insights I was given during my frequent visits to the temples. Although I was attempting to detect conflicts and discrepancies, I must say that there was a strong degree of consensus among people at the various sites regarding the extent of their own temple territory. The only minor conflict was between the eastern side of the *Puyuan Gong* 普願宮 and the western side of the *Shuangfu Gong*. Some people at *Puyuan Gong* said it extended to the old *Xianing Street* 夏寧街, whereas some at *Shuangfu Gong* argued that it would reach the more recent *Chongqing North Road*. However, since the general consensus among people at both sites seemed to favour the *Puyuan Gong* version, I present the territories of the two temples accordingly.

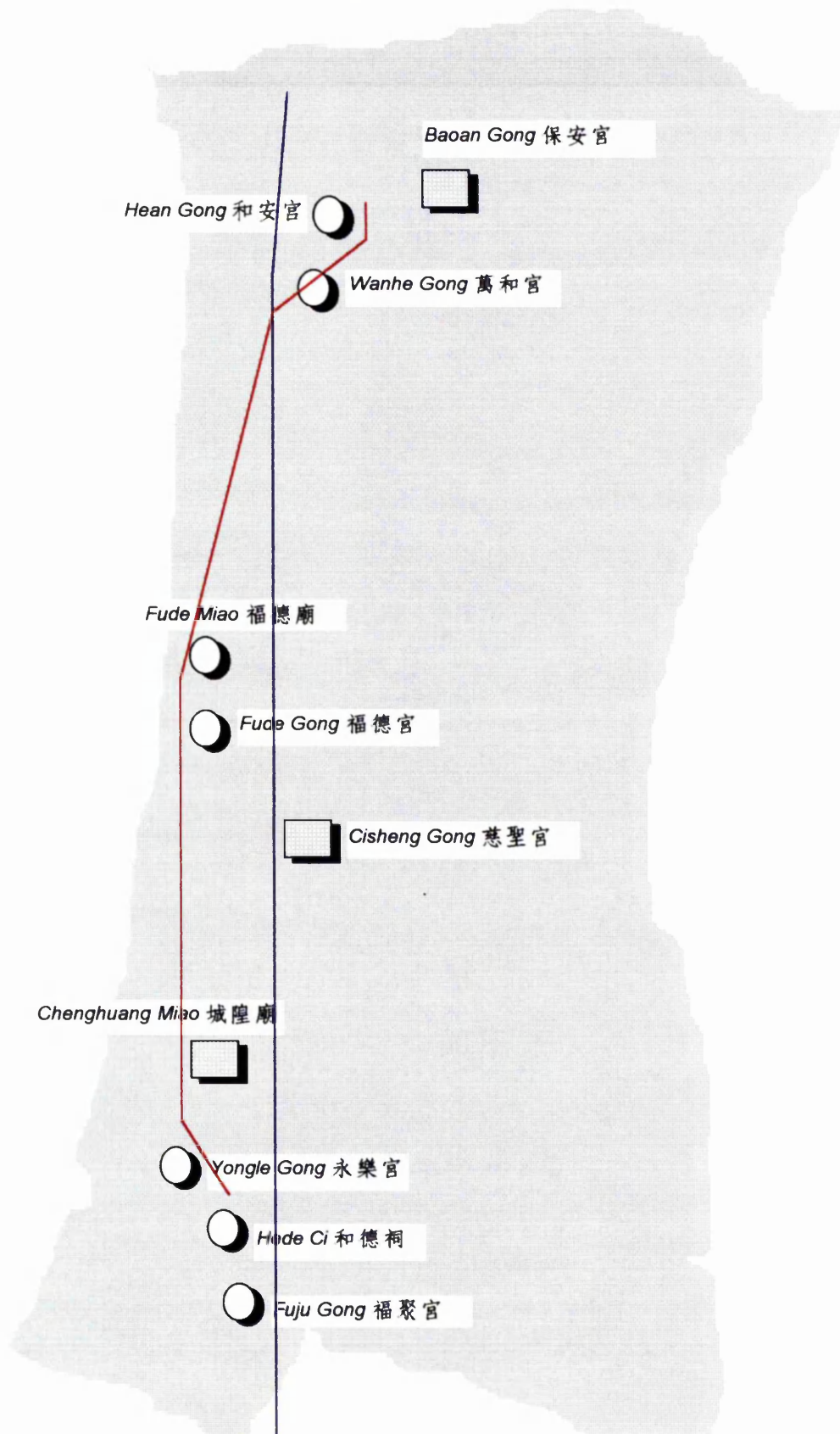
⁴ A clear example refers to the two *Tudi Gong* temples in *Dalongtong*: the *Hean Gong* and the *Wanhe Gong*, protecting the *Dalongtong* settlement. In addition, in 1914 the community of *Beimen* (especially *Waihou Jie*, *Fuju Jie* and *Xingren Jie*) refurbished the local *Tudi Gong* temple and named it *Fuju Gong* (after the name of one of the streets that contributed to its refurbishing). For this see the introduction to the temple at the beginning of the third part of this chapter.

⁵ The *Yongle Gong* territory seemed to correspond to *Yongle Ding* during the Japanese occupation.



1.3 'Siting' and 'sighting' Tudi Gong temples in Datong district

M10. Yanping route



Fuju Gong

P1	P2
P3	



Hede Ci

P4

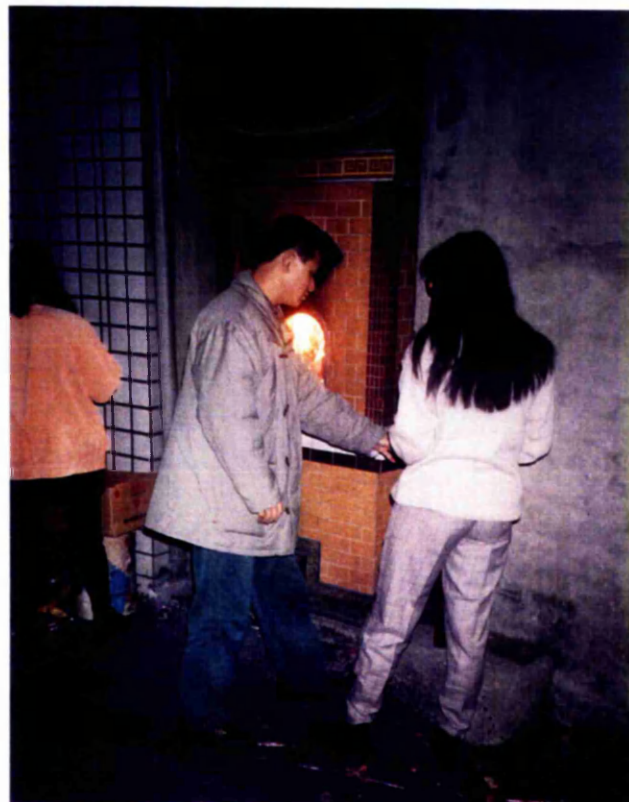
P5



Yongle Gong

P6 P7

P8



Chenghuang Miao

P9

P10

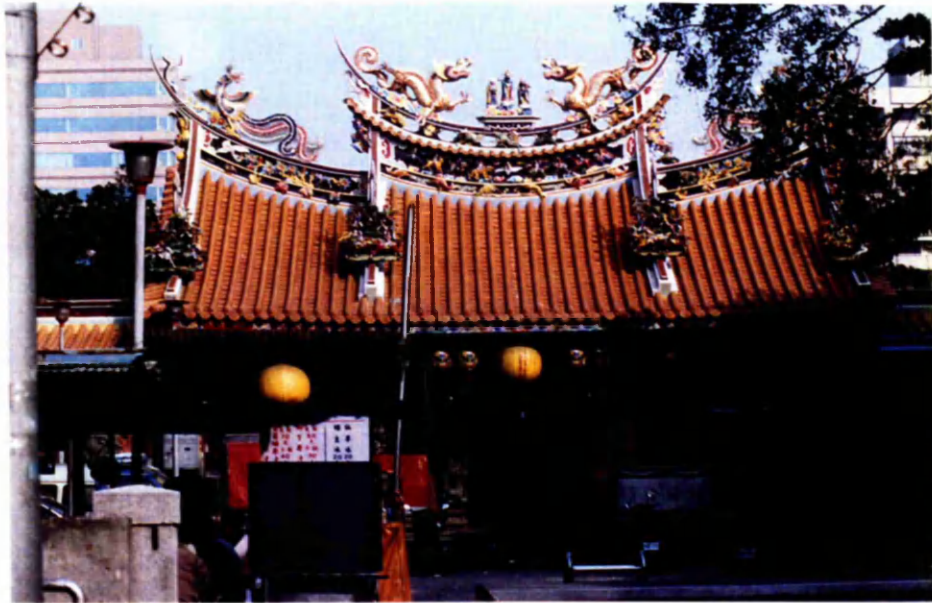


Cisheng Gong

P11

P12

P13



Fude Gong

P14

P15



Fude Miao

P16 P17

P18



Wanhe Gong

P19

P20

P21



Hean Gong

P22 P23

P24



Baoan Gong

P25 P26

P27



Fuju Gong 福聚宮

Following the *Yanping* route from the southern part of the district, the first *Tudi Gong* temple I used to visit in *Datong* was the *Fuju Gong*. This is itself located on *Yanping North Road, Sect. 1, No. 68* 延平北路1段68號. Its brightly-coloured two-storey façade is very prominent and can be viewed from the adjacent road and from the opposite side of the street. Walking on the pavement on the same side as the temple, however, one might not notice it until one passes by it. It often happened that I missed it altogether - and I was not alone in this. People would often retrace a few steps, perform a quick worship, and then continue on their way. The temple, in fact, resembles an ordinary and well-kept shop whose 'merchandise,' or it would be better to say 'owner,' attracts clients for hasty window-shopping.

This was the comment that a Taiwanese friend of mine, with whom I once visited the temple, made when he saw the location of the temple. There was no irreverence in his words and, I hope, neither is there in the way I report the event. On the contrary, he was fascinated by this *Tudi Gong* temple which looked quite different from those he had seen in his youth in the countryside. The architecture and the location of the temple appeared rather unconventional to him. However, the *Fude Zhengshen* 福德正神, the main deity of the temple, was very familiar to him.

During celebrations, this shop-like temple would attract a good number of passers-by, sometimes impeding the flow of people on the narrow pavement in front of the temple. Once, in the temple, I was reminded of an old Taiwanese saying which goes '*giáh hiu¹ toè pài²*': seeing people 'holding-lifting an incense stick, (others will) follow (and) worship.'⁶ Located on the main road, this temple does indeed entice people to stop for a short while. This temple was located on a different site before being built on the current one.

As I would discover later, this process of relocation has often occurred with several Tudi Gong temples. The fact that they are relatively small, makes them relatively 'mobile' at times when new roads have to be constructed or the configuration of the community settlement somehow changes or moves. To attempt to reconstruct the history of such temples, therefore, is an extremely arduous task.

The fact that before and during fieldwork I was often told that the first temple Chinese would build when settling in a new place is a Tudi Gong temple, led me to speculate on the extent to which these temples could imply something about the historical origin of a given settlement. Although not entirely, I soon abandoned this line of investigation. Tudi Gong temples have often moved location and, in recognition of the community's development, they have often been refurbished and enlarged. Thus, it appears almost impossible to trace the original temple from which the current ones have evolved as no written historical material seems to have been

⁶ Literally, this proverb can be translated as follows: *giáh* (hold-lifting), *hiu¹* (incense stick), *toè* (follow), *pài* (worship). The four Chinese characters are: 舉香隨拜 *ju xiang sui bai*.

compiled from earlier times. I still remember the comment that an elderly man made when I asked whether Tudi Gong temples had historical records. **'In the past, life in Taiwan was a matter of survival, there was neither time nor energy to keep records.'**

This paucity of material is understandable: these original temples, in fact, were often temporary, minimalist constructions in which a 'stone' would represent the Tudi Gong. Just occasionally, such small temples can still be found in the countryside. In addition, educated people and scholars would not pay much attention to these temples, as they were confined, and to a certain degree still are, inside the boundaries of the interests and knowledge of the ordinary people. What can be done, however, is to trace the history of a temple back as far as is possible through the stories recounted by local people as well as by the historical development of the places themselves.

The *Fuju Gong* seems to have been started on 20th March 1884, *Guangxu* 光緒 10th year, and completed the following year on 2nd February. It was given the name of *Fude Ci* 福德祠. Later on its name was changed to *Jingfu Gong* 景福宮. It appears that the main financial contribution was given by people living on *Daixin Street* 稻新街, currently *Ganyu Street* 甘谷街. In 1909 the Japanese began a restructuring of the city districts and new roads were built. In 1914, therefore, the *Fuju Gong* was moved to the current location from the small lane on the left of the temple. The community of *Beimen* 北們, especially *Waihou Street* 外後街, *Fuju Street* 福聚街 and *Xingren Street* 興仁街, contributed to its rebuilding and changed its name to *Fuju Gong*, named after one of the streets.⁷

As I have already pointed out, the main deity of the temple is *Fude Zhengshen*. It was explained to me that on His left side there is the *Yintong* 銀童, on His right there is the *Jintong* 金童. These are deities who help (部下 *buxia*) *Tudi Gong* in His various encounters and dealings in favour of the people He protects. There are though people who said that these two deities are actually *Wuban* 武班 and *Wenban* 文班 or *Wuzhuang Yuan* 武狀元 and *Wenzhuang Yuan* 文狀元. On a small altar in the temple there is also *Santaizi* 三太子, flanked by *Qiye* 七爺 and *Baye* 八爺.

***Hede Ci* 和德祠**

Walking a few minutes in a northerly direction, one of the streets on the left side of *Yanping North Road* is *Ganyu Street* 甘谷街. As soon as one has turned down this street, the temple is

⁷ The historical information on this temple has been furnished in an article by Li Gen-Yuan (1953: 80). He also pointed out that the main celebrations for *Tudi Gong*'s birthday were held on the 2nd day of the 2nd lunar month and on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month. These dates are still kept today at the *Fuju Gong*.

clearly visible. *Hede Ci* is located at no. 42 and is surrounded by modern buildings: a fine architectural contrast between old and new, traditional and modern. This has led me to speculate on the extent to which such sites, not uncommon in *Taipei* city, may tell us of the meeting, merging and overlapping of traditional and modern values and world-views of Taiwanese people and of changing senses towards (one's own) place.

At various times I visited the Hede Ci during my fieldwork. I was looking for a chance to make contacts with some visitors and worshippers. Despite the frequency of my visits, however, it did not happen as I had hoped and so far I have been unable to elicit information and data on the temple from people going there regularly. However, literature on the historical development of the district did furnish some information that, I feel, may shed some light on the temple, its Tudi Gong and its specific location.

During the *Qing* dynasty the street took its name from the *Tudi Gong* temple sited there: it was called *Tudi Gong miao zai jie* 土地公廟仔街. Later, the temple itself seems to have changed its name. In the past it was called *Jingfu Gong* 景福宮 and it must have been given the name of *Hede Ci* 和德祠 over the last twenty years.

During the Japanese period, *Ganyu* Street was famous for its rice market. The old name of the street was, therefore, changed to *Daoxin* 稻新⁸ and was located between *Yongle ding* 永樂町 and *Taiping ding* 太平町. Every morning the price of rice all over Taiwan was dictated by the market price in *Daoxin* Street, which also became the site of rice gambling.⁹

The dark brown wooden figure of *Tudi Gong* in the temple seems to be a very valuable piece of art. Well carved, it presents a round-faced and nicely corpulent *Tudi Gong*. His happy smiling round face reminded me of the link between eating rice and good health that some elderly Chinese had often talked about during my first stay in Taiwan. I now wonder whether the representation of the *Hede Ci Tudi Gong* is somehow related to the fact that the temple was located on a street famous for its rice market and, indeed, for the associated wealth of its local people.

The long and heavy stick that *Tudi Gong* holds in his right hand reminded me of a ritual that I have not witnessed, but is reported in *Taiwan Wenhua Shouli* 1994.¹⁰ It is said that farmers would insert the '*Tudi Gong stick*' (土地公的拐杖) into the land when praying for an abundant harvest. Most probably, it was to emphasise *Tudi Gong*'s association with agriculture and with notions of land, fertility, prosperity and rice.

⁸ The character *dao* 稻 means rice.

⁹ *Taipei Wenxian* 1992, 99, 3-5.

¹⁰ *Taiwan Wenhua Shouli* (1994: 36). The ritual is called *Chunxinfu* 春新福 (literally, *Spring New Fortune/Blessing*) and it was also performed using bamboo poles, inserted in the land, with paper money wrapped on them. See also Lin Mei-Rong (1992a: 61).

In 1912 the *Hede Ci* became the meeting place for local people led by *Luo Fu-Xing* 羅福星, an overseas Taiwanese, who were plotting revolution against the Japanese. *Luo Fu-Xing* was born in Indonesia and went to live in *Miaoli* 苗栗. He joined the 329 *Huanghuagang* 黃花岡 but was caught and killed in 1914, on the 3rd March.¹¹ Nothing now remains in the temple nor is there any memorial on the street to honour this hero who started his revolution from *Ganyu* Street. In *Miaoli*, by contrast, there is a park and a temple to commemorate *Luo Fu-Xing's* sacrifice.¹²

On *Ganyu* Street everything, that is people, things, names and atmosphere, seems to have changed except the *Tudi Gong*. He is still there as a silent witness of events which happened on His precinct. From His position (He looks at the street, in fact) He continues to guard this now tranquil place. The memory of more lively times on the street has almost been forgotten but it has been written down in the history of *Taipei* city and Taiwan. It remains, with *Tudi Gong*, the only thing we have as a legacy of *Ganyu* Street.

Yongle Gong 永樂宮

Once at the intersection with *Nanjing West Road*, I would turn left and reach the *Yongle Gong*, at *Nanjing West Road*, Lane 293, No. 25 南京西路293巷25號. The temple is hidden among the houses of a narrow and locally typical lane. ***'A lot of people who live in the vicinity do not know that here there is a Tudi Gong temple... We do not publicise it, we do not have any special activity except the 2nd day of the second lunar month, the 15th of the 8th month and the 16th of the 12 month, which are special days of celebration for Tudi Gong. A lot of people would come here to worship on the 1st and 2nd day and on the 15th and 16th day of each lunar month, especially the owners of stalls in the close by Yongle market. At the moment we also have two associations: one has 72 members, the other 19. The latter is mainly composed of elderly people who meet regularly', Da-Zhou*** 大洲, the guardian of the temple, pointed out.

Da-Zhou is the youngest guardian of a *Tudi Gong* temple I met in the district. He is thirty-two years old and spends day after day at his temple. For a living he also sells sweets and drinks to children who would flock there after school and to people living or working in the vicinity.

¹¹ Presumably, the 329 *Huanghuagang* (Yellow Chrysanthemum Hill) was associated with the 72 Revolutionary Martyrs of *Huanghuagang*, who lost their lives on March 29th, 1911, in an attempt to capture Canton and where buried at *Huanghuagang*, a small hill outside Canton.

¹² The information regarding *Luo Fu-Xing* have been taken from Zhuang Yong-Ming (1991: 100-1).

I came to know him quite well and had long chats with him during my fieldwork. At various times he expressed the wish to know about the practice of religion in Italy and in Europe and we would often exchange our knowledge on such matters in a friendly and enjoyable way. I feel that we learned a lot from each other and for this I am deeply grateful to him.

At least for the time being *Da-Zhou* does not want to change his occupation. ***'My grandfather and my father were in charge of the temple. I feel that I have to continue to be the guardian of this temple. Several times in the past I have tried to find a job. I did not succeed. I felt that Tudi Gong was getting me to come back to this place once again.'*** *Da-Zhou* also feels that his *Tudi Gong* is protecting him in a special way. A few years ago the apartment that his parents left to him and that he now rents remained unscathed during a fire in which several other apartments were seriously damaged.

On the map of the district I noticed that *Yongle Gong* is located in the same administrative unit (*Yongle li* 永樂里) as the *Chenghuang* temple and the *Hede Ci*. I asked *Da-Zhou* whether his temple had 'connections' with these two temples. He was indeed aware of the existence of the *Chenghuang* temple in the vicinity, but he did not know anything about the *Hede Ci*. Regarding the former he pointed out that his temple does not have any 'political' connection with the *Chenghuang* or with the current *lizhang* who lives in the northern part of the *li*, close to the *Chenghuang* temple. He has no connection with them and does not look for any. ***'My father, he stressed, had more political connections in the area.'*** *Da-Zhou* seems to be convinced that a temple should be free from political involvement. ***'I feel that this temple only relies on the power/strength of deities (靠神明的力量). A good number of people also come from outside the neighborhood. A couple of years ago there was the case of a man who was told by the spirit medium (乩童) of his native place - Taoyuan county - to come to this Tudi Gong if he wanted his request to be granted. The same happened to a man from Xinzhu. I attribute this to the power/strength of deities.'*** On another occasion he explained to me that in the vicinity there are a lot of people who have migrated from Taoyuan and Xinzhu. *Da-Zhou* also told me the story of a man who ***'having seen a ghost'*** (碰到一個鬼) immediately ran to *Yongle Gong* as ***'ghosts are afraid of approaching the vicinity of Tudi Gong temples'*** (鬼不敢接近土地公廟附近).

Before starting my fieldwork, guided by the few academic articles and information on *Tudi Gong* temples, I imagined that these temples would form alliances or connections, especially if contiguously located on a relatively small territory such as that of *Datong* district. With the map of the various temples of the district in my hand, I would ask people and guardians if they were aware of the existence of other *Tudi Gong* temples in the vicinity. There was very little knowledge of the existence and location of other temples, let alone alliances or connections. I had the feeling that each temple was thought of as an 'independent' unit (我們是獨立地) and if

there were some kind of connections or otherwise these might somehow be shown during rituals and religious celebrations. I will come back to this later in the thesis.

Da-Zhou is very attached to his temple, even physically: he would not, in fact, take a holiday or go away even for a day or two. He would often point out to me the latest refurbishing that had been done and introduce me to what he knew about the temple, always stressing that in many ways his temple is 'very special' (很特別), an expression that I would hear in almost all the Tudi Gong temples in the district and in the city of Taipei.

My understanding of the meaning of 'hen tebie' 很特別, that I heard so many times, grew slowly with the growing of my knowledge of the various Tudi Gong temples and of the place(s) where they were located. The differences in temples' architecture and representations of Tudi Gong have become linked with the characteristics of the places where they were located and, indeed, with the localized histories of temples, people and places. An interesting triptych that would guide my research.

'My mother, who died in 1992, Da-Zhou continued, told me that the temple seems to have been established during the Qing dynasty and according to what I have heard from elderly people who come to the temple, the Tudi Gong we have here was the guardian of a tomb in the vicinity. I also heard that in the past there must have been a tree near the temple. As you see here in the temple, under the altar and near the tiger, we also have the Youying Gong. Probably because around this place there was a cemetery in the past.'

The temple seems to have been established just after the 20th year of *Daoguang* 道光 (circa 1841-1850). I was told that in the beginning the *Tudi Gong* temple and the *Youying Gong* were located in between *Nanjing West Road*, *West Ning North Road* and the current lane, under a big tree. The old name of the area was *Gangzaigou* 港仔溝, not far from the 9th door on the *Danshui* river.¹³ During the Japanese occupation the area was restructured and named *Yongle ding*, which together with *Taiping ding* were 'the most lively places in *Dadao Cheng* before the 70s.'¹⁴ Modern western style houses were built and the temple was moved to its current location. The temple is relatively close to the *Yongle* market which was restructured by the Japanese after 1908 into a *Modern Market* (as the Japanese called it). The land of the market, that today consists of several market buildings, had previously been a garden which served as the *Chenghuang* temple ground and afterwards as a rudimentary wooden-built market.¹⁵

¹³ See map in Zhuang Yong-Ming (1991: 84).

¹⁴ *Taipei Wenxian* 1990, 94, 6.

¹⁵ Zhuang Yong-Ming (1991:84).

Da-Zhou was right about the cemetery which was located in the area, and this, I feel, seems to be the main reason for the existence of a *Youying Gong* temple close to the *Tudi Gong* temple, and as one can see today, inside the same *Yongle Gong*. In the past, there were a lot of tombs on the two sides of the southern part of *Dihua Street* and *Tacheng Street* (north of *Changan West Road*). The area from *Yongle* market to *Ganyu Street* corner was called *Muzaipu* 墓仔埔 and the area from *Ganyu Street* corner to *Changan West Road* was called *Muzaipuwai* 墓仔埔尾. At the intersection of *Changan West Road* and *Tacheng*, there were several shops specialised in making 'tombstones' (墓碑). In 1935, the Japanese Government, in order to organise the *International Trade Fair* and afraid of showing an unpleasant image of the place, decided to remove the tombs and started to renovate the whole area. But it was not until after 1945 that the area was completely restored and its roads enlarged.¹⁶

Retracing my steps from *Nanjing West Road*, I would start to walk along *Dihua Street*, the most characteristic and ancient road in the district. From *Nanjing West Road*, located in the southern part of the district, *Dihua Street* follows the river upward to the northern part: it first goes through the *Dadaocheng* locality and then to the *Dalongtong* locality. *Dihua Street* would take me to the *Chenghuang* temple at Sect. 1, No. 61 迪化街1段61號.¹⁷

Fude Gong 福德宮

Walking through *Dadaocheng*, one of the two oldest localities in the district, and just before reaching the *Taibei Bridge* 台北大橋, I would visit the *Fude Gong*, on *Anxi Street*, at No. 114 安西街114號. The temple is located on one of the most historical sites of *Dadaocheng*. In fact, '*Dihua Street at the northern side of Guisui Street 歸綏街 is the earliest developed part of Dadaocheng. Here, the buildings are older and one can still find Ching dynasty wooden houses.*'¹⁸ In addition, as Mr. Gao pointed out in an article about the *Fude Gong* (Gao 1991b), the temple is also known as *Xia Tudi Gong temple* 下土地公廟 (*xia* means 'below'). The reason for this, he continues, is because *Dadaocheng* developed from North to South and it opened up from West to East.¹⁹

¹⁶ *Taibei Wenxian* 1992, 99, 4-5.

¹⁷ The relationship between *Chenghuang* and *Tudi Gong* will be introduced in chapter four of this thesis.

¹⁸ *Taibei Wenxian* 1992, 99, 5.

¹⁹ According to Mr. Gao the temple was previously located on an area which today corresponds to the back of *Dihua Street*, sect. 1, no. 318. The temple was sited close to a water channel which flowed into the *Danshui* river. Here, *Tudi Gong* would especially take care of the *shuiwei* 水尾, the mouth of the water channel. Following a restructuring of the locality by the Japanese in the first decades of the 20th century and a strong typhoon in 1910, the temple was rebuilt at the location shown on the 1895 map of *Dadaocheng*. This appears to be the current site. In 1977-78, the temple was refurbished.

Before the construction of the *Xiahai Chenghuang Miao* (1859) the *Fude Gong* was the only communal religious centre in the area. The saying, *Ding Chenghuang, xia Tuzhi* 頂城隍，下土治²⁰ refers to the relation of these two temples with the territory of *Dadaocheng* and the community living there. *Chenghuang* is at the 'top' (*ding*), in the southern part of the locality and more recently developed, while the *Fude Gong* is sited 'below' (*xia*), the northern area which developed much earlier (Gao 1991b: 99).²¹

Being familiar with various sites of Taipei city, I had the feeling of walking through a different city each time I used to visit the Fude Gong. Spatially, there seems to be no clear boundary among the manifold places which make up Dadaocheng locality. The approximately geometrical configuration of the district's main roads almost provide a connecting point as well as a dividing line among the mass of houses and shops. There are indeed administrative boundaries (li and lin), but these do not seem to epitomise the variety of specific 'local histories' and 'local places' which have emerged through the stages of the historical and geographical formation of the locality, the district and the city.

Local architectures, memories of the past among its inhabitants, and the images and senses of place one has while walking in the district, would indicate one's crossing into different places. These almost create a characteristic atmosphere which, in the case of the place where the Fude Gong is located, is quite distinctive.

A young Taiwanese artist, with whom I went to the Fude Gong more than once, pointed out that, 'the old photos of the place seem to show a sense of a modern city (現代的城市) when compared with old photos of other places in the city. Today, it seems to be an underdeveloped area (落後地區). There is almost an atmosphere of decadence pervading the area as one walks through this part of the district.'

Some doubts, however, would surface in the words of my young Taiwanese artist friend. 'Surely, she continued, the area of Dongqu 東區 gives a sense of modern or postmodern in the architectural set up (後現代的城市). I wonder, however, about the extent to which the Taiwanese sensibilities and minds have changed. In the past the area of today's

²⁰ During fieldwork, I heard several people, especially the elderly, who would address *Tudi Gong* as *Tuzhi Gong* 土治公. The *zhi* 治 means to administer, control, govern. It also refers to the seat of the local government.

²¹ In his article Mr. Gao (1991b), with whom I visited the *Fude Gong* several times, particularly focuses on the first settlement in the district and its relation with the cult of *Tudi Gong*. This specific temple 'may' have been established towards the end of the *Kangxi* 康熙 period, around 1720. However, while Mr. Gao presents detailed data on the formation of the first settlement in the area and the changes it has undergone over a period of two centuries, his indication of the first establishment of the above *Tudi Gong* temple seems to be a deductive hypothesis based on the widespread Chinese view that the first temple the Chinese build when settling in a new place is a *Tudi Gong* temple. This view is widely shared by people in Taiwan. I incline to agree with Mr. Gao's approach, notwithstanding, as I have already pointed out in this chapter, there is an understandable lack of written records about this temple, and more generally on *Tudi Gong* temples.

Datong district was an avant garde zone. Local people would fight to set in motion a process of change from tradition to modernity. For example, I know that they strongly opposed the practice of foot-binding of Taiwanese women... In other words the changes in the architecture were probably a result of a new mentality which was emerging. Today, this is my feeling, the architectural changes or local characteristics are somehow directing the way we perceive the city of Taipei, our own places and indeed ourselves.'

Dadaocheng was indeed an extremely flourishing locality, both economically and culturally, at the end of the 19th century. The arrival of foreigners, who resided in the area - especially on *Liuguan Street* 六館街, gave a boost to the tea industry and through the *Danshui* river, commerce gave *Dadaocheng* an international acknowledgment.²² *Dadaocheng* also became a meeting point for intellectuals, musicians, singers, dancers, poets and painters. Besides, around today's *Yuanhuan* 圓環, several western style coffee shops were opened. Western and local cultural trends and views were shared and enjoyed in such locales.²³

From the *Fude Gong*, I would then reach the *Cisheng Gong* 慈聖宮, *Baoan Street*, Lane 49, No. 17 保安街49巷17號. This very famous temple dedicated to *Mazu*, has a characteristic *Tudi Gong* in one of the small temples on the right inside it. *'It is one of the richest Tudi Gong in the district,'* a worshipper told me during one of my visits to the temple. There was no need to explain. Apart from the jewellery with which *Tudi Gong* is adorned, I could also see that He is also frequently worshipped by local business people. The connection between the *Cisheng Gong* and *Fude Miao* started from the time of the construction of the *Mazu* temple. The *Tudi Gong* statue was in fact given as a present by the *Fude Miao Tudi Gong Association*: the *Wufu Hui* 五福會 (Gao 1991b: 100-1). In addition, during the *Mazu* procession, on 21st April 1995 (the 22nd day of the 3rd lunar month), I observed that the *Fude Gong* was the only *Tudi Gong* temple which took part in the celebration with almost thirty well arranged cars and carrying their temple's *Tudi Gong*.

***Fude Miao* 福德廟**

After the *Taipei Bridge* we come to the *Fude Miao*, which is located on *Dihua Street*, Sect. 2, No. 25 迪化街2段25號. During the *Qing* dynasty this place was called *Sikanzai* 四坎仔 and *Caopuzai* 草埔仔, which were the southern parts of *Niumoche* 牛磨車 Street (today it is the southern part of *Minzu West Road*). At that time they belonged to *Dadaocheng* locality. During the first decades of the Japanese period *Guoxing* 國興 Street, *Fangxi* 枋隲 Street and *Niumoche*

²² See Huang De-Shi (1952) and Lian Wen-Liao (1953).

²³ This information was collected during a theatre performance on 'Life in *Dadaocheng* at the end of the 18th century.'

牛磨車 Street still belonged to *Dadaocheng* district. At the completion of the *Taipei* bridge (1921-1925) the part north of the bridge was named *Dalongtong* district. After 1945, the first district mayor included *Dalongtong* in what is today *Datong* district.

The old name of the place where the *Fude* temple is sited was *Fangxihou* 枋陳後 Street. In the period of *Guangxu*, during the *Qing* dynasty, *Fangxihou* Street became a 'gathering place for trading' (市集) because of the goods transported by boat on the *Danshui* river. Before 1884, there was already *Zhanglao Christian Association* 基督教張老會 here. The *Fangxi* Street became a prosperous and active centre in the area.

Local elderly people stressed that according to oral traditions, the *Dachiao Fude* temple was already established during the *Qing* dynasty. It was located in between *Guoxing* Street and *Fangxi* Street. The temple, however, was not shown on the map the Japanese made of the city in August 1895. Although it was very small, the temple was highly regarded by local people as a centre of worship.

The construction of the *Taipei* bridge greatly reduced the need for transportation on the river. This indeed influenced life in the area to the extent that it gradually lost its importance as an economic centre. The change seems also to have stunted the progress of the place's architectural development.

The *Fude* temple was refurbished in 1964 and it is taken care of by the '*Daqiao Fude* temple committee' (大橋福德廟管理委員會). On the occasion of *Tudi Gong* birthday (2nd day of 2nd lunar month) there are plays, which can last from ten days to one month, performed in thanksgiving to *Tudi Gong*. I was told that during the seventh lunar month the *Pudu* 普渡 ritual is performed.

Now that I am writing about this temple, it has reminded me of an episode which happened at the temple on *Tudi Gong*'s birthday, the 2nd day of the 2nd lunar month. I will report the fact as I wrote it on that same evening.

...during my visit to the temple, a man in his forties realised that my interest in Tudi Gong was not just that of a visitor casually passing by the temple and stopping for a few minutes. 'You are showing a profound respect to our Tudi Gong, he said, are you researching on Him?' I was surprised at hearing that. It was true that when visiting temples I would be very discreet and respectful of the deity and of the people worshipping. I would also ask permission of the local Tudi Gong that I was about to take some pictures. 'If you are not polite towards Tudi Gong the photos you take will come out all black. You should first ask the local deity for permission,' I remember people telling me on several occasions.

The man I met at the temple was born in the area and after a few years spent in Jilong, he decided to go back to his native place. It seems that he had already seen me visiting the temple in the previous weeks. 'In all my life I have never seen foreigners coming

to our temple.' With a box of biscuits he had come to the temple for his usual worship. He left his offering on the table in front of the temple and invited me to have a look at the Tudi Gong. **'Can you see the hat of Tudi Gong?'** he asked. The opaque glass in front of Tudi Gong prevented us from seeing the statue of Tudi Gong clearly. A small circular hole in the glass, however, allowed us to peer at His hat. **'It is a shouzi 壽子 hat. He wears that kind of hat because the territory He is protecting is a business area.'**

Around the temple, in fact, there are small businesses as well as wine-houses and barber shops which are often connected with prostitution. The neighbourhood, however, more closely resembles a small rural township and the temple appears to be the main locale where elderly people especially would often assemble.

This is an image that has become fixed in my memory: I would often associate the smiling and welcoming face of elderly men I have often met in Tudi Gong temples with Tudi Gong Himself. I still remember Mr. Wang, the old guardian of a Jilong Tudi Gong temple, who took me to the sacred place inside his temple to have a clearer look at all the Tudi Gongs he had there; or the warm welcoming of an old man in the Fude temple itself. Elderly women in charge of some temples, in contrast, tend to be a bit more suspicious. I wonder whether this attitude would have any connection with the feelings that people have towards Tudi Gong and his wife Tudi Po.

Wanhe Gong 萬和宮 and Hean Gong 和安宮

The Wanhe Gong and the Hean Gong are both sited in Dalongtong locality, on Dihua Street, sect. 2 迪化街2段; the former at no. 304, the latter at no. 360. Although independent from one another as far as management is concerned, the two temples are respectively addressed as *wai* 外 (outside) Tudi Gong Miao and *nei* 內 (inside) Tudi Gong Miao.

Tudi Gong temples may be thought of sometimes as pairs, depending on the specific position they occupy in a relatively circumscribed place. Thus, **wai** and **nei**, outside and inside, seem to refer to their locations outside and inside the boundaries of a given settlement, or community, or city streets. The Wai Tudi Gong Miao takes care of the farmland - as in the case of the Wanhe Gong during the Qing dynasty - and the Nei Tudi Gong Miao would more specifically protect the community settlement - as for the Hean Gong.

One comes across another pair: the **shang** 上 (up) and the **xia** 下 (down) which would refer to two Tudi Gong temples: one located on the peak of a mountain, for example, and the other in its valley. The **shang** and **xia** could also refer to two Tudi Gong temples which geographically occupy two locations which, because of the configuration of the place, may be envisaged as higher and lower.

These two pairs seem to be the most common. Somehow they suggest a horizontal and vertical construction-imagination of place in which Tudi Gong temples may be seen as indicators of the way people in Taiwan have constructed their social and natural space in the practice of everyday life with reference to the territory they have settled in.

Rivers or any other watercourse, essential in an agricultural society, may be guarded by two Tudi Gong temples: one sited at its source **tou** 頭 or **ding** 頂 Tudi Gong Miao and another one at its mouth **wei** 尾 Tudi Gong Miao. This pair, however, although it appears to have been 'broken' in the current configuration of the city, is sometimes still maintained in the way people address these temples.

Another common feature of the *Wanhe Gong* and the *Hean Gong* is that they both have *Tudi Po* 土地婆, who is commonly believed to be the wife of *Tudi Gong*. More striking is the fact that only these two *Tudi Gong* temples in *Datong* district have the statue of *Tudi Po*. I have not managed to find any reason for this from my raconteurs. Later in the thesis, I may be able to speculate on it and, more generally, on the role of *Tudi Po*.

Mr. Zhang 張, who is the owner of a shop on the left side of the *Hean Gong* and former *lizhang* 里長 of the former *Fujing li* 福境里, told me that the temple had *Tudi Po* from the beginning of its establishment. The *Wanhe Gong* seems to have had the statue added later. The *Hean Gong*, in fact, is older than the *Wanhe Gong* and is said to be the oldest *Tudi Gong* temple in *Datong* district. It was built during the *Qing* dynasty and it has more than one hundred years of history. In 1978, the temple was refurbished to be as it appears today.²⁴

The street just in front of *Hean Gong* leads to the *Baoan Gong* 保安宮, which is located on *Hami Street*, No. 61 哈密街 61號. During the period of my fieldwork, the *Baoan Gong* was partly under refurbishment, although still functioning for worship. The refurbishing, I was told, was to last four years and several ritual activities, such as processions and theatre, have been temporarily suspended for the duration of the works.²⁵

During my frequent visits to the temple, I detected that the *Baoan Gong* was becoming more and more a 'cultural' centre. Activities such as conferences about the temple and on more general topics such as Taiwanese folk religion, teaching classes of calligraphy and painting, were held regularly during the week. Last year, for example, an international *Baosheng Culture Day* (保生文化節) was celebrated in the temple compound. It was well attended and seemed likely to continue in the future.

²⁴ See Lin Wan-Zhuan (1989: 29).

²⁵ The last substantial refurbishing of the *Baoan Gong* was done in 1918.

Classified as a 'second class monument' (二級古蹟), the temple was built in 1805 by *Tongan* 同安 people and has as its main deity the god protector of life *Baosheng Dadi* 保生大帝. It is also dedicated to the God of Medicine. Several times, in fact, I have witnessed long queues of people carrying small trays with underclothes of sick loved ones. A blessing on those clothes from the Taoist priest would, hopefully, restore the health of the relative or friends.

Among the several small altars on the two sides of the temple and behind, the *Baoan Gong* also has its *Tudi Gong*. Temples where *Tudi Gong* is not the main deity, in fact, have an altar with the statue of the deity. In all the temples I have visited during my fieldwork I have always noticed the presence of *Tudi Gong* statues. The *Baoan Gong*'s *Tudi Gong* looks very imposing: his long black hair and beard hide a serious expression under his *Wusha Mao* 烏紗帽, a hat worn by officials in ancient China. He also wears the traditional officials' robe: **'He really looks like an ancient official,'** it was pointed out to me.

It should also be noted that the *Baoan Gong Tudi Gong*'s *duilian*²⁶ is the same as that portrayed on the two sides of *Tudi Gong* and *Tudi Po* altar in the *Hean Gong*. Furthermore, although the *duilian* text clearly refers to *Tudi Po*, the *Baoan Gong* only shows the statue of *Tudi Gong* accompanied by His two subordinates.

This identical *duilian*, coupled with the fact that the *Hean Gong* and the *Baoan Gong* are sited very closely to each other, led me to suspect there was or is a connection between the two temples. The answer I was given several times and from different people was, **'there is not!'** Even when I pointed out that the two *Tudi Gongs*' altar have the same *duilian*, people I asked would not admit there was any possible link between the two *Tudi Gongs*. Were these people just unaware of it or was there really no connection between the two temples? The identical *duilian* seems to indicate some kind of connection between the two *Tudi Gongs*. Local knowledge of it, however, is absent or maybe forgotten.

During one visit to the locality, Mr. Gao pointed out to me the specific location of the *Hean Gong* in reference with the *Baoan Gong* and the local Police office. The *Tudi Gong* temple and the local Police office are sited, respectively, on the left and right of the *Baoan Gong*. Such a configuration seems to highlight one of the roles which have been ascribed to *Tudi Gong*: a low ranking policeman in charge of policing the ghosts in a specific territory, equivalent to the role that, among humans, is attributed to local policemen.

Established in *Daoguang* 道光 19th year (1839),²⁷ the *Wanhe Gong* is located in a place which was called *wai Tudi Gong pu* 外土地公埔, as the area was mainly a deserted and 'outside plain' (外埔). During the *Qing* dynasty its *Tudi Gong* was specially thought of as taking care of

²⁶ A *duilian* 對聯 is a Chinese couplet which is often written and mounted on scrolls. In temples it is hung on the two sides of the altar of any deity.

²⁷ The *Hean Gong*, therefore, should have been established before 1839.

and protecting the land and any activity which was connected with agriculture. Until the 1950s the square in front of the temple was employed as a horticultural trading centre, which then moved to *Jiuquan Street Flower Market* 酒泉花市.²⁸ The *duilian* written by *Chen Wei-Ying* 陳維英 in 1867 and hanging on the right wall inside the temple also emphasises the agricultural function of this temple's *Tudi Gong*.²⁹

It was not until 1953 that the temple was refurbished and enlarged to its current appearance. Its half-hexagonal shape and its central position in the neighbourhood seems to give the idea of a local centre, a place which is very often visited by local inhabitants. This is the impression I received during my frequent visits to the temple. It is, however, on special days to celebrate *Tudi Gong* that the temple becomes extremely busy. On March, 2nd 1995 I spent a few hours at the *Wanhe Gong*. Here, I report a passage from my fieldnotes that I wrote that same evening.

Today, the 2nd day of the 2nd lunar month, is the birthday of Tudi Gong. It is one of the two days during the year in which His birthday is celebrated, the other being the 15th day of the 8th lunar month, the same day as the Mid-Autumn Festival... From early morning I went to visit as many temples in Datong district as I could. I wanted to have an overall picture of the cult of Tudi Gong in the district on the day of his birthday. I managed to visit twelve temples...

The Wanhe Gong was particularly crowded. Elderly people had already been sitting for hours in front of the temple, while couples would come and go with their children, teaching them how to hold the incense stick and ask Tudi Gong for protection and blessing.

Ten statues of Tudi Gong and ten 'censers' (香爐) on a table in front of the main entrance caught my attention as I approached the temple. Mrs. Zeng, the secretary of the temple, told me that some people may like to take home a Tudi Gong statue and a censer for one year. This custom is called 'qing Tudi Gong' 請土地公, to invite Tudi Gong. The following year, on the same day, the statue and the censer would be returned to the temple and an offering be made to contribute to the Tudi Gong theatre. This is to be performed just in front of the temple to allow Tudi Gong to enjoy the show (給土地公看的).

²⁸ See Lin Wan-Zhuan (1989:30).

²⁹ 古者風遺松柏栗，社公兩潤麥苗香 (*gu zhe feng yi song bo li, she gong liang run mai miao xiang*). This *duilian* essentially communicates the idea that the heritage left by ancient people is as precious as the pine and the cypress (since they remain green during the winter, these trees are highly valued by the Chinese); *Tudi Gong* is considered as great as those ancient people because He enriches people's life with two crops a year.

Often a group of friends would 'bubei' 卜盞³⁰ to ask Tudi Gong whether it would be possible to take home His statue and censer, as well as who, among the friends, should take care of them for one year.

This custom of taking home the statues and holding the Tudi Gong theatre are but two elements of the activities that the temple organizes to celebrate Tudi Gong, especially on the occurrence of His birthday. Yearly, the temple also arranges trips to other temples on the island. In March 1995, for example, a good number of Wanhe Gong worshippers went to Lugang, Xingang, Beigang and Checheng (near Pingdong). Checheng exhibits the biggest Tudi Gong temple in the world.

It appeared to me that the Wanhe Gong is, most probably, the best organised temple in Datong district. A full-time secretary, Mrs. Zeng Chun-Man 曾春滿, is in charge of the everyday running of the temple and the implementing of decisions which are taken during meetings of the temple committee. Through the help of Mrs. Zeng, I was kindly invited to attend, as guest of honour, one of these meetings³¹ which took place at the Santos Hotel 三德飯店, on Chengde Road 承德路 in Datong district, on May 6th 1995 from 2pm to 8pm.

Sixty-five people were present, six of whom were women. The meeting, which was all conducted in Taiwanese, had as its main objectives the election of the 'board of directors' 董事人 (15 people) and the 'board of supervisors' 監事人 (5 people) with their chairmen (事長), and the presentation and approval of the temple budget of the last three years.³² Further discussions focused on the profit accruing from some plots of land in Datong district which belong to the temple and the decision to suspend the Tudi Gong procession 土地公遶境 for the next five years. The money saved from such expensive celebrations would be used to build an activity centre on a plot of land which belongs to the temple. Mr. Dong Zu-Wen 董祖文, one of the two chairmen of the meeting, told me afterwards that it is more in accordance with Tudi Gong 'style,' to use the money given to His temple for social purposes. The temple, in fact, also has a budget for grants to be offered to poor students.

I must say that the organisation of the Wanhe Gong and its aims impressed me very much. Apart from more practical issues which were discussed in the meeting, several times the

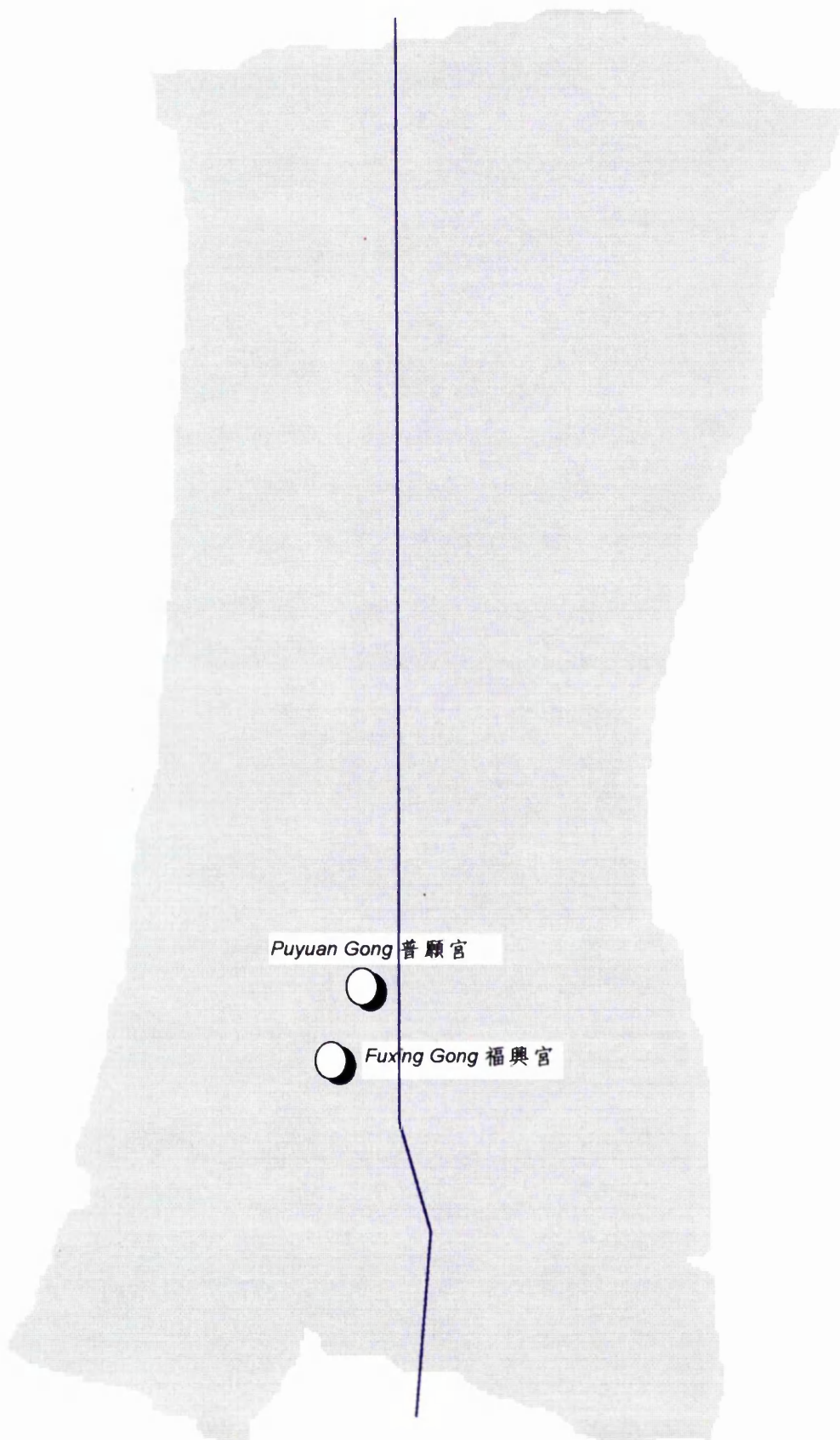
³⁰ Bubei (in Taiwanese babue) is a divination practice in which the worshipper throws two divination blocks - kidney shaped pieces of wood - on the ground. From the way the blocks settle the worshipper receives one of three possible answers from a god ('yes,' 'no' or 'try again').

³¹ 萬和宮第四屆第四次信徒大會 (Wanhe Gong disi jie disi ci xintu dahui): The 4th annual meeting of Wanhe Gong's believers.

³² I was also entrusted with a copy of the budget of the temple and it would have been interesting to present it as well as compare it with those of two other temples in the district. It would surely have given some insights on Tudi Gong temples economic management and strategies. As I did not ask whether I could make the budget public in a thesis, I refrain from presenting any data related to it.

reverence, affection and attachment to their Tudi Gong, their temple and the locality to which these are sited were emphasised.

The following day I checked the names and addresses, which were given to me, of all the participants to the meeting. I detected that a good number of them are currently residing in various zones of *Taibei* such as *Banchiao*, *Beitou*, *Shilin*, *Shipai*, *Luzhou*, *Sanchong*, *Xinzhuang*, or in other areas in *Datong* district. Although some people have moved away from the locality, it was explained to me later that they are still strongly attached to the *Wanhe Gong* and regularly attend meetings, celebrations and activities. Despite the mobility of people in the area, the *Wanhe Gong Tudi Gong* still remains a fixed reference point for many of them.

M11. Chongqing route

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Fuxing Gong



福興宮建於日據時代奉祀福德正神及樹仔公在大埤埋地區廣受
民眾之信仰及膜拜但廟宇經數十年甚為破舊故於民國七十八年間
由地方有志人士組福興宮修建委員會於民國七十九年底順利修建
完成修建委員會為對修廟捐款捐物之各善信表達謝意除捐缺實物
者芳名明刻於實物上外捐缺現金者以上之善信芳名刻於匾並
祈求福德正神及樹仔公庇祐國泰民安

福興宮修建委員會

委員 陳劍鳴
委員 陳卓敏
委員 陳基

陳劍鳴 陳壽獻 陳鑑泉 李何慶月 廖樹永
許義福 鄭義雄 蔡全登 黃正義 洪添丁

以恩味陳水齋
陳佳定 李行
康如龍 施石伴
黃瑞聚 黃泰木
沈門局 張文

Puyuan Gong

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Fuxing Gong 福興宮

The *Chongqing* route would lead me to the *Fuxing Gong*, on *Nanjing West Road, Lane 167*, No. 33 南京西路 167 巷 33 號. Although only a short distance from the *Chenghuang* temple on *Dihua Street*, the temple does not seem to be frequently visited by local inhabitants when compared with other *Tudi Gong* temples in *Datong* district. I was told that one of the reasons for the sparse attendance could be that people probably prefer to go to the more famous - and probably more *ling* (efficacious) - *Chenghuang* temple for their worship.

Sited in a small park, the *Fuxing Gong* was built three years into the Japanese period in 1898: the construction started on November 15th and was completed in December 25th of the same year. Contributions were given mainly by people living on *Guoxing Street* 國興街.³³ The short introduction to the temple, which is carved on the left site of the building, points out that the *Fuxing Gong* was built to worship *Fude Zhengshen* and *Shuzai Gong* 樹仔公, the sacred tree. In 1989-90 the temple underwent a substantial refurbishment.

The *Taipei Shizhi*,³⁴ published in 1976, reports the names and addresses of the temples located in the former *Yenping* district. The current *Fuxing Gong* was then called *Jingfu Gong* 景福宮. Its name, therefore, must have been changed during the last twenty years. More interesting is the fact that in the *Taipei Shizhi* the *Fuxing Gong*, the *Fuju Gong* and the *Hede Ci* are all reported with the same name of *Jingfu Gong*. These three temples are all sited relatively close to each other and all in the former *Yenping* district.

So far, I have not been able to find any reason for the three temples sharing a common name in the past. Possibly, one may summarise that the locality where these temples are sited was formerly known as *Jingfu*. This speculation, however, is not supported by any oral account or written documents.

Without reaching any specific conclusion, the above information gives rise to a set of interesting questions. Why do temples, and *Tudi Gong* temples particularly, change their name so easily and frequently? Is it because by changing a temple name it is hoped that its *ling* may become more efficacious, such as in the case of changing people's names? Would the decision and the choice of changing a temple name be decided by the streets/people who contribute, with more substantial donations, to its refurbishing? Some temples in the district, in fact, have in their names at least one character which refers to one of the streets located around the temple.

³³ Li Gen-Yuan (1953: 80).

³⁴ *Taipei Shizhi* (1976: 70-1).

Puyuan Gong 普願宮

The *Puyuan Gong* is located on *Guisui Jie*, No. 64-9 歸綏街 64-9 號. The temple originated from an 'association of literati' (文人之會) which was established around 1882 on *Puyuan Street* 普願街 by *Huang Yu-Jie* 黃玉階 and *Huang Jian-Xun* 黃建勳. At the beginning it was called *Puyuan She* 普願社 and its main purpose was to keep and introduce 'good and virtuous books about the words of ancient saints and sages' (善書先賢格言).³⁵

Li Gen-Yuan (1953: 81) reports that in 1899 the *Puyuan She* moved to a three-storey building which was erected in the *Rixin Street Market* 日新街市場. Due to the Japanese restructuring of the city streets in 1909, the building was partly demolished. The following year it was refurbished and a new two-storey building was added. Mr. Gao told me that the new structure was built in the octagonal architectural form of a *bagua* 八卦. This was demolished just after 1913, the year in which *Puyuan She* built the *Sansheng Miao* 三聖廟 to hold, on the 22nd day of the 3rd lunar month, the *Taishang Ceremony* 太上祭典 (Lin & Song 1992: 77). After the death in 1917 of *Huang Yu-Jie*, who had just been *Dadaocheng* mayor, the name of the *Puyan She* was changed into *Puhua Tang* 普化堂 and public conferences encouraging people to 'perform good deeds' (做善事) were held in the temple.³⁶

In 1953 the temple was located on *Baoan Street* 保安街 (Li Gen-Yuan 1953: 81). It was not until 1968 that the *Puyuan She* received planning permission to be built - as it appears today - on the original spot, after talks held between the government, the *lizhang* and local people.

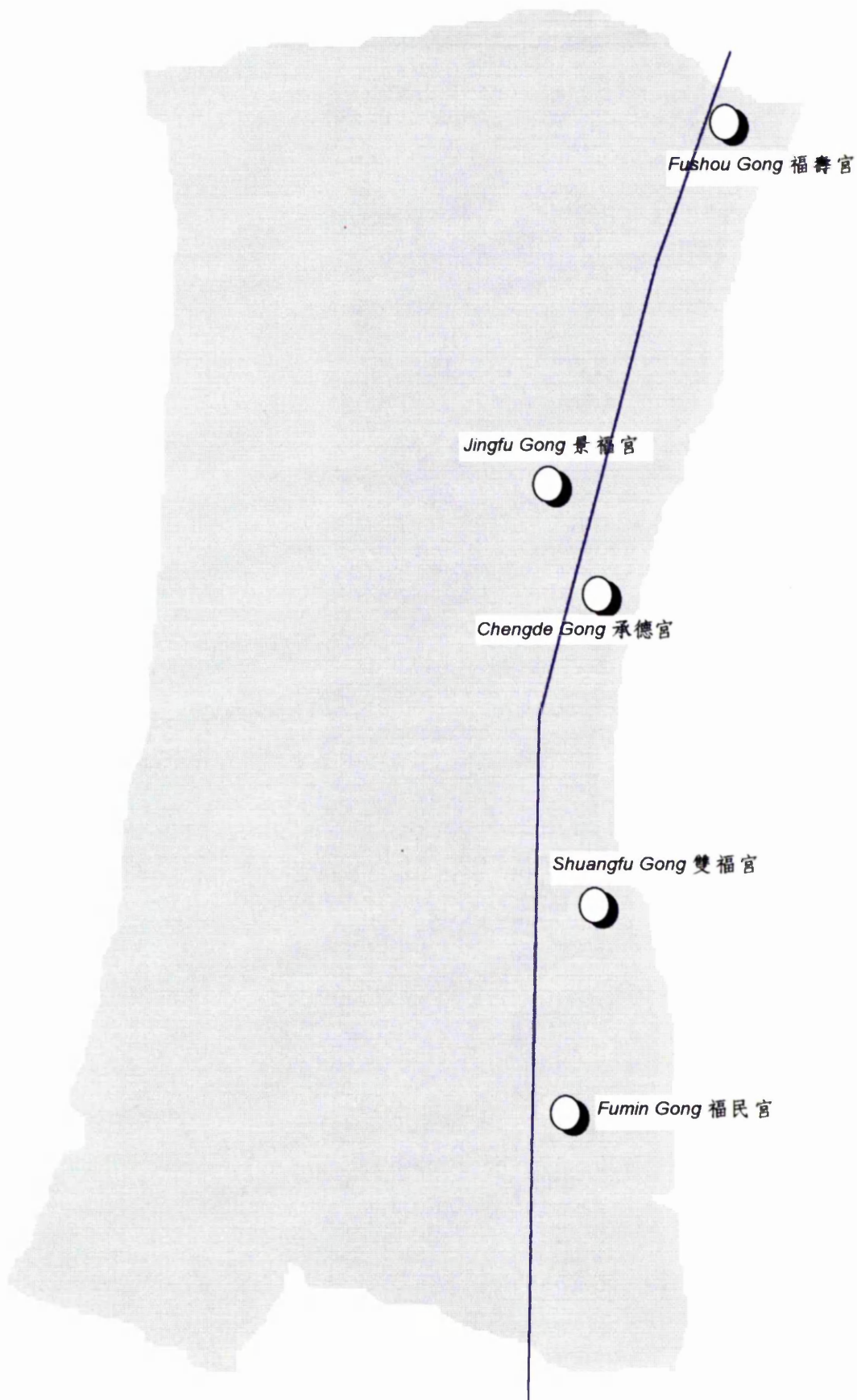
I feel that oral and written information on the origin and development of the Puyuan Gong that I have managed to collect and my attempt to collate them together do seem to show a lack of consistency and continuity. To a certain extent, this reflects the geographical mobility of the temple, which has been moved to different locations since its establishment, as well as a change in its objectives over the years. Its religious pantheon has been constantly enlarged³⁷ until the relatively recent introduction of Tudi Gong as its main deity.

The transformation of this temple into a *Tudi Gong* temple is a quite unusual phenomenon as is the exceptional high rate and frequency of worshippers and the variety of activities organised by a very active temple committee. Among these it is worth mentioning the *Tudi Gong* theatre performed by several troupes on the occasion of the second *Tudi Gong* birthday on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month, the Mid-Autumn Festival day. Theatre performances and film projections are arranged regularly throughout a whole month.

³⁵ Li Gen-Yuan (1953: 81) and personal communication with *Gao Xian-Zhi*, January 1995.

³⁶ Personal communication with elderly people at the *Puyuan Gong*, March 1995.

³⁷ Li Gen-Yuan (1953: 81).

M12. Chengde route

Fumin Gong

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Shuangfu Gong

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Chengde Gong

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Jingfu Gong

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Fushou Gong

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M13. Map of Taipei city: 1920

Source: Chen San-Jing (1981)



The map of *Taipei* city on the previous page is taken from Chen San-Jing (1981). It was drawn in 1920 during the planning stage for constructing several new streets. The upper part of the map shows *Dadaocheng* and part of *Dalongtong*. As an inset, I have highlighted three main localities - *Niupuzaijie* 牛埔仔街, *Niupuzhuang* 牛埔庄 and *Shanzaijiaozhuang* 山仔腳庄 - where the *Tudi Gong* temples on the current *Chengde* trajectory were first established.³⁸

The reader will already have noticed that these three localities were agricultural areas, thus the main functions of *Tudi Gong* temples which were established at that time were those of protecting both farmland and water. The five *Tudi Gong* temples on the *Chengde* route are all founded more recently, compared with those I have presented so far.

Furthermore, they were very mobile during the first stages of their establishment as they were refurbished, moved or chosen as community temples according to the pattern of human settlements in *Taipei* city at the turn of the 20th century and the construction and restructuring of the city streets during the Japanese period.

Fumin Gong 福民宮

Following the *Chengde* route, the *Fumin Gong*, which is located on *Chengde Road*, sect. 2, no. 3, 承德路2段3號 at the intersection with *Nanjing West Road*, is sited in the locality that at the end of *Qing* dynasty and through the first decades of the 20th century was called *Niupuzaijie* 牛埔仔街.

At that time this locality was still a paddy field. At the southern part of today's *Rixin Elementary School* 日新國小 there was a pond which was called *Lengjiaopi* 稜角陂; at the current *Central Theatre* 中央戲院 location there was another pond called *Niuzapi* 牛灶陂. Towards the end of the *Qing* dynasty, at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, the *Fumin Gong* was already established in the locality *Niupuzaijie*.³⁹

In 1971 it was moved to the current location which is close to the *Jiancheng Park* 建成公園, opened that same year. The thorough 1985 restructuring and refurbishing gave the temple the architectural look it is shown today.

An interesting feature of this temple is the regular and detailed publication -every six months- of the financial income and expenses. In the period from the 3rd day of the 2nd lunar month to the 16th day of the 8th lunar month of 1994, the total amount was as follows:

³⁸ Literally *Niupuzaijie* means *niu* (cattle), *pu* (plain), *zai* (small/young; belong to) and *jie* (street). *Niupuzhuang* means *niu* (cattle), *pu* (plain) and *zhuang* (settlement). *Shanzaijiaozhuang* means *shan* (mountain), *zai* (small/young; belong to), *jiao* (foot) and *zhuang* (settlement).

³⁹ Mr. Gao suggested that the location corresponds to the current *Chengde Road*, sect. 2, lane 39.

income	491,520 NTD	(about 11,000 pounds)
expenses	524,463 NTD	(about 11,650 pounds)
balance (def.)	32,943 NTD	(about 730 pounds)

The *Fumin Gong* also has a fund that on October 15th, 1994 amounted to 1,423,800 NTD (about 31,640 pounds).⁴⁰

***Shuangfu Gong* 雙福宮**

After the intersection with *Minsheng West Road* 民生西路, on its right side, there is the *Shuangfu Gong* which is located on *Shuanglian Street*, No. 37 雙連街37號. Mr. Gao, who has particularly researched this temple (Gao 1991a) points out that at its very beginning the temple was a very small construction close to a water course called *Shuanglianbei* 雙連埤, in between the two localities *Niupuzajie* and *Niupuzhuang*. In 1891 a bigger temple was built in the nearby locality of *Zhugeliao* 豬哥寮. In 1903 there were thirty small settlements in the locality with a population of 178 people altogether. With the construction of streets in 1910 the temple was demolished and reconstructed in a section of the locality called *Xiakuifuding* 下奎府町.

In 1920 the name of the area in which the temple is sited changed to *Rixin ding* 日新町 (一一丁目一59號), and after 1945 to *Minsheng Road* 民生路 (127號). It changed again in 1964 to *Minsheng West Road* 民生西路. Due to the enlargement of the *Chengde Road* in 1972 the temple was moved from the main road to its current address (Gao 1991a: 111-12).

As I myself did, the reader too may start to wonder how Tudi Gong temples may manage to survive in such continuous changes. Talking with several people who were well aware of the social changes in the city of Taipei and in Taiwan generally, I had the feeling that senses of place, community and identity, which may have been threatened in the development of the district in its different stages, have been kept alive and, I would say, strengthened by the establishment of Tudi Gong temples. Tudi Gong, in other words, seems to reflect the flexibility of the Taiwanese in adjusting to new names, new streets, new places.

***Chengde Gong* 承德宮**

On one side of the *Santos Hotel*, there is the *Chengde Gong*, *Chengde Road*, Sect. 3, Lane 51, No. 3 承德路3段51巷3號. The short explanation shown at the entrance of the temple

⁴⁰ In January-March 1995, 1 pound corresponded to 45 New Taiwanese Dollars.

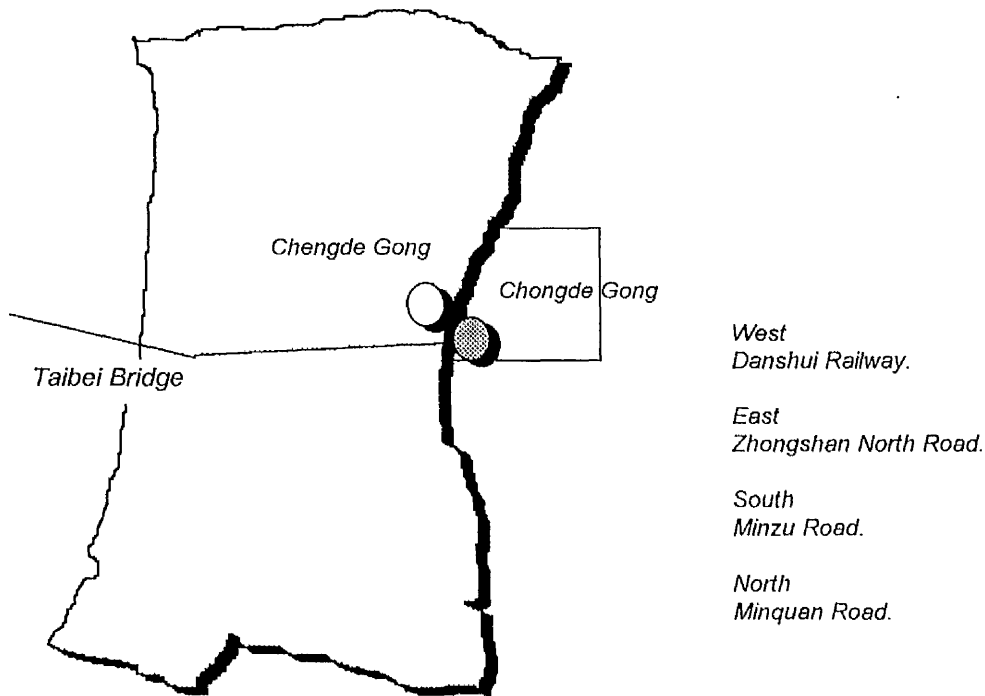
states that the *Chengde Gong* was originally established in 1892 by *Lian Ti* 連體, a local man living in the southern part of *Niupuzhuang*, which was called *Niupuxialouzhuang* 牛埔下樓庄. At that time the temple was very tiny and located at the margins of paddy fields. Its *Tudi Gong*, however, was believed to be very *ling* by local inhabitants who decided to appoint Him as their community protector.

In 1948, *Gao He-Shun* 高和順 financed the refurbishing of the temple and *Liu A-tou* 劉阿頭 named it *Penglai Ci* 蓬萊祠 after the *li* in which it was located (蓬萊里). The fact that in 1952 *Li Shui-Lian* 李水連 and others established two *Fude Associations* (福德會) which would also hold celebrations on two different dates (15th day of the 10th lunar month and 15th day of the 11th lunar month), makes me wonder whether there might have been some disagreements within the community. In 1963, in fact, the two associations agreed to rebuild the temple with financial contribution from both sides and to name it as *Chengde Gong*. The date for the annual temple celebration also changed to the 5th day of the 5th lunar month.

Examining the map of the *Tudi Gong* temples' territories, one notices that the *Chengde Gong* territory is quite modest. I was intrigued by such smallness and attempted to find the reason for it. It transpires that during the Japanese period the *Chengde Gong* was kept by local inhabitants as their only community religious centre, even though the *Danshui Railway* divided the temple territory into two: the eastern side and the western side where the temple is located. The main reason seems to have been that many people living on one side possessed land on the other side.

Later, with the development of the locality as well as a reconfiguration of the administrative boundaries of *Taipei* city districts, the *Chengde Gong* was assigned to *Datong* district, while the main territory of the temple was assigned to *Zhongshan* district. The *Danshui Railway* became the dividing line between the two districts.

As the eastern part of the *Danshui Railway* - that is the current western side of *Zhongshan* district - became more populated, two local inhabitants *Liu A-Shi* 劉阿石 and *Zhou Guo-Fa* 周國發 suggested that a new *Tudi Gong* temple should be built in that locality. In 1968 the temple was inaugurated and it was given the name of *Chongde Gong* 崇德宮. This is currently located on *Fushun Street, Lane 41, No. 2-10* 撫順街41巷2之10 and its territory boundaries are as follows:



M14. Chongde temple's territory

Jingfu Gong 景福宮

Visiting several markets in *Taibei* city, I noticed that a small temple or an altar dedicated to *Tudi Gong* is arranged on the market ground. Usually the *Tudi Gong* image is associated with that of *Guangong*. The *Jingfu Gong* is located in the *Lanzhou market* 蘭州市場 on *Changji Street*, No. 55 昌吉街 55 號.

Established in 1994, this is the most recent *Tudi Gong* temple in *Datong* district. Mr. *Wu Jie-Shan* 吳皆山, who is *Yangya li* 楊雅里 *lizhang* as well as in charge of the temple, told Mr. *Gao* and myself that during the *Qing* dynasty the *Tudi Gong* was a small stone plaque with four characters inscribed on it: *Fude Zhengshen* 福德正神. Later it was chosen as this locality's *Tudi Gong* by the *Tuzaikou* 屠宰口⁴¹ and people living in the vicinity.

The stone plaque, which was later flanked by a statue of *Tudi Gong*, were both placed in a house nearby during the construction of the local government building just above the market. The plaque and the statue were moved, then, to the second floor of the building. Only recently the city government has given permission to establish the temple which is a room on the first floor of the market compound.

⁴¹ The *Tuzai kou*, which means 'slaughter house,' was established by the Japanese as a domestic animals market. Because of the frequent slaughtering of animals, whose cries could be heard in the vicinity, the market was given the name of *Tuzai kou* by local inhabitants (Zhao Ju-Ling 1993: 46-7).

Fushou Gong 福壽宮

The *Fushou Gong*, *Dunhuang Road*, No. 2-3 敦煌路2-3號, is located in the upper northern part of the district which, during the *Qing* dynasty, was called *Shanzaijiaozhuang* 山仔腳庄.⁴² The western part of this locality was incorporated in *Dalongtong*. On the map on the next page, I have highlighted the small settlement where the *Tudi Gong* temple originated. On the 'censer' (香爐) inside the temple, it is inscribed the date 1863, but the temple may have functioned well before that time.

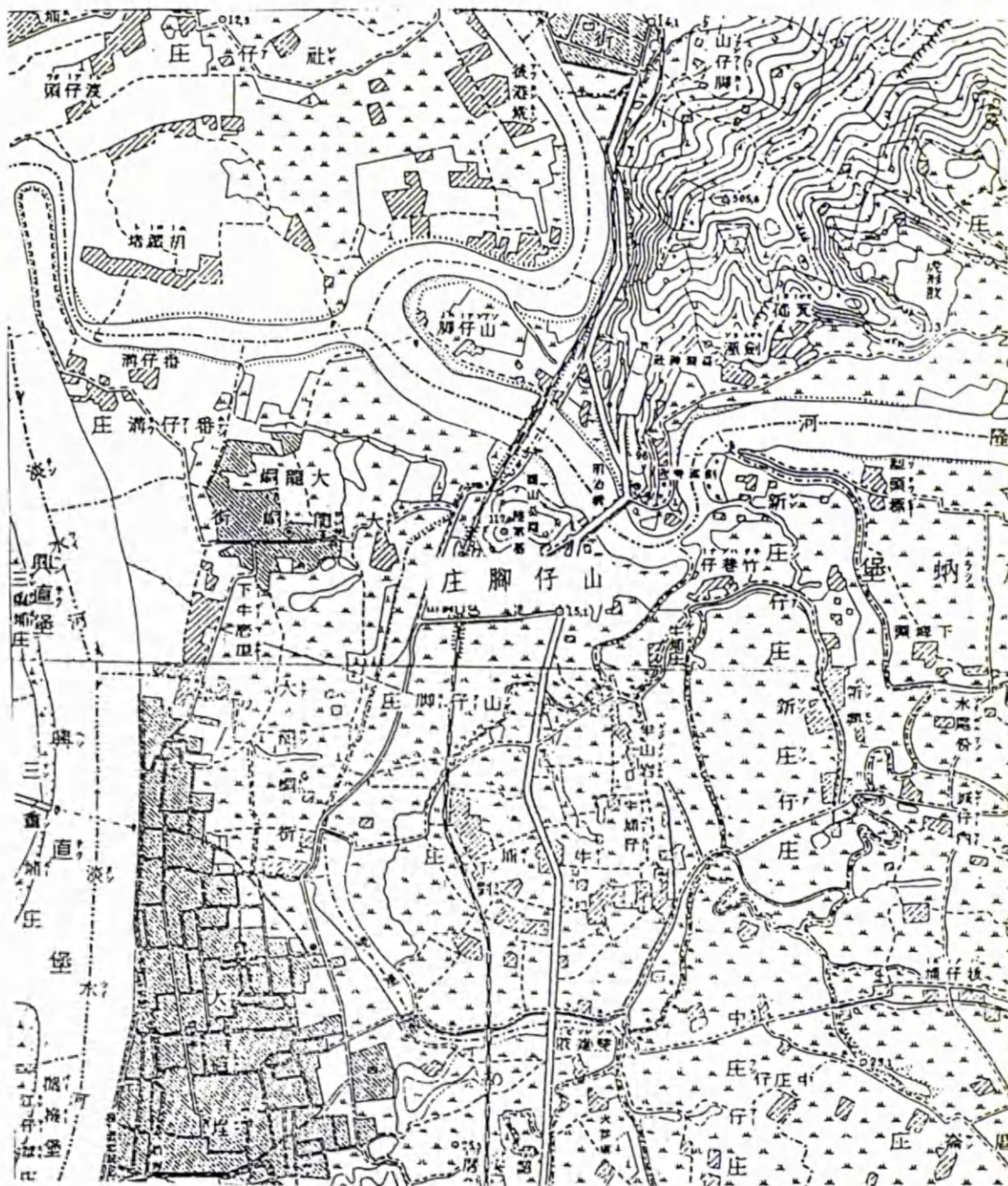
Just after 1945 the locality belonged to *Zhongshan* district. From 1951, however, it passed under the jurisdiction of *Dafong* district as the railway become the dividing line between the two districts. Despite the administrative changes, the temple seems to have maintained the territory of the original settlement. Its eastern side, in fact, extends to the *Xinsheng North Road* 新生北路.

In 1982, with the improvement of the *Dunhuang Road*, the *Fushou Gong* was moved from the central part of the road and rebuilt on the current location. On March 20th 1997, *Zhongguo Shibao* 中國時報, a leading Taiwanese newspaper, reported the news that the city government was planning a further restructuring of the temple as it obstructs the pavement of the *Dunhuang Road*. The opposition from local inhabitants forced *Chen Shui-Pian* 陳水扁, the *Taipei* city mayor, to visit the temple and reassure them that the temple will neither be moved nor destroyed. The newspaper headline reads thus: 阿扁發善心 不動福壽宮, *A-Pian (the city mayor) discloses a compassionate heart, he will not move the Fushou Gong*. Apart from strengthening the city mayor's popularity among local inhabitants, such a move also shows the respect and consideration that government leaders seem to have especially towards *Tudi Gong* temples. Whether this is out of political calculation or out of a genuine respect towards *Tudi Gong* nobody seems to care. The important aspect is that the *Fushou Gong* will continue to be there for the people living in the locality, and that, through their *Tudi Gong* temple, the 'voice' of the local community has been listened to.

⁴² It is the current *Yuanshan* 圓山 locality.

M15. Map of Shanzaijiaozhuang locality: 1903-1904

Source: Lin Wan-Zhuan (1989: 41)



M16. Ninth Door route

Qiansui Fude Gong
千歲福德宮



Fuan Gong 福安宮

Fuan Gong

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Qiansui Fude Gong

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On the bank on the *Danshui* river, at *Door No. 9* 第九水門, there was a park being refurbished at the time I left Taiwan (November 1995). Elderly people especially living on the *Minsheng West Road* 民生西路 have been taking advantage of its proximity for physical exercises in the morning and, later on, tea and chats with friends. The park is also being equipped with several playgrounds (運動場).

I used to reach that place through *Yanping North Road - Minsheng West Road* and then enter *Door No. 9* on the river. At the beginning of my fieldwork there were two *Tudi Gong* temples in the park which I refer to as *Shetuan Tudi Gong Miao* 社團土地公廟. Although located in public areas, they were established by two private and voluntary associations, with around thirty people each, formed because of the common interest of its people in physical exercise.

It was pointed out to me that the *Fuan Miao* 福安廟 was established almost a decade ago on the 8th day of the 8th lunar month. Every year on this day, a special celebration is held as it is on *Tudi Gong* birthdays on the 2nd day of the 2nd lunar month and on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month.

The *Qiansui Fude Gong* 千歲福德宮, which was the smallest in the district, was destroyed by the local government in March 1995 because those who established it failed to register it with the appropriate authorities, I was told. Despite this, the temple and its *Tudi Gong* seem to have survived as the association has built a mobile temple at the original location where *Tudi Gong* is placed in the mornings and carried home by one of the members after the association activities have ended.

Tudi Gong temples, therefore, seem to function here as unifying entities around which people belonging to specific interest-groups may both '**worship Tudi Gong at their own convenience**' as well as strengthen their interest as an association around a tangible structure, which can be adapted according to the needs of the occasion.

Chapter Two

永興社區

Yongxing village

2.1 'Feeling at home': positioning myself and being positioned

2.2 My good friend Lai guzhang and his family

2.3 Yongxing: the village and its people

2.4 Tudi Gong, Lin Peng and the Twelve Ancient Heroes

2.5 On my way back to the city...

2.1 'Feeling at home': positioning myself and being positioned

Sitting in front of my computer, I let my memory wander freely throughout the past few years and try to recollect the first time I heard about Yongxing village. '說來話長' the Taiwanese would say, 'it's a long story,' almost showing a sense of reticence to talk about things that have happened by chance and have involved, subsequently, so many people and places over the years. My eyes are still staring at the screen of my computer and I wish that my recollection of people and places could happen suddenly and in a description as close as possible to the events that took place some time ago...

It all started with a computer and a good friend. In 1992 I began my second year of Chinese language studies in Taiwan. I decided to purchase a computer and went to a shop which was located - and still is - on Xinyi road 信義路, fifteen minutes' walk from the place I was living. I must say that several times before, when passing by that shop, I told myself, **'if I decide to buy a computer, I will first come here.'**

There, I met Adam, Lin Gaohong 林高弘, a young and friendly man functioning as sale manager, who would become one of my best friends in Taiwan. It was probably that same day or the second time that I went to the shop that he invited me to go to Yongxing village, where some of his relatives live. I accepted the invitation and after a couple of weeks we were on the road, heading towards the village of Yongxing.

In the following years we went several times to Yongxing village, sometimes just the two of us, sometimes with relatives and friends. For us all, Yongxing village would be the final destination of our journey southwards.

It was during the first journey that I started to learn about Adam's family and the link he has with Yongxing village. One of the first things that impressed me was the way Adam was talking about and describing the small village. It was the kind of place that he would always enjoy going to spend a few days. **'Since I was a child, Adam said, I would often go there with my family, especially during summer or sometimes at the Chinese New Year.'** His recollection was vivid and touching: the mountains, the river, the air, the 'three-sides' (三合院) house, the games, the other children, A-Ma 阿媽 the grandmother, and his guzhang 姑丈 (uncle), started to locate themselves in my imagination. For Adam all that was the recollection of an intense experience; for me it was the sharing of a listener who was starting to sense, though partially, the lure of a place and its people.

It was then that I became consciously aware of the entanglement that I would experience that same night when trying to put in writing Adam's feelings. No matter how well an anthropologist is able to prepare himself/herself for the field in terms of language(s), understanding of local histories and traditions, a good attitude towards people, etc., he/she will always lack - at least, that was my case and, I suppose, of the majority of anthropologists - the same memories of the past and senses of place of the people among whom we conduct fieldwork. Despite the fact that as a foreign anthropologist in Taiwan, I would be entrusted with a variety of personal histories and an extraordinary assistance in the collection of data and information, this alone, I felt and still feel, would not be enough to embark on 'writing cultures.'

One has probably to become profoundly aware of and accept the limitations of writing an ethnographic account while so many pieces are missing. I could never have the same memories of the past and senses of place of Adam or of any other person - this can also apply to the people living on Taiwan, coming from different places.

What I could try, however, was to let stories of these people and places become merged, at a specific time and place, with my own personal story and 'set sail.' In this way, I would initiate an anthropological journey that would have, as an intermediary place, my ethnographic account. This would rather take the form of a 'rapportage,' the writing about the changing and continuous intermingling of the narratives of specific people, places and their Tudi Gongs with my own.

The name of Adam's *guzhang* was mentioned quite a lot during the journey. ***'I like him,'*** Adam repeated several times, ***'and my father likes him, too,'*** he added, thus showing a sense of affection, attachment and devotion for his *guzhang*. ***'He could have been a famous man now, but he has never wanted to leave his Yongxing.'***

Adam would then compare *Taipei* and *Yongxing*. ***'Life in Yongxing village is less formal than in Taipei, there is more time for human relationships. In the village one has a chance to breathe a bit of fresh air, both literally and symbolically. That's probably one of the reasons why my guzhang loves this place so much.'***

The *guzhang's* wife is the elder sister of Adam's father. Although my friend is very attached to his father's family (from *Qingshui* 清水, near *Taizhong* 台中), he prefers to have, as his destination when he drives southwards, the small village of *Yongxing*. There is, however, on the way to *Yongxing* or back to *Taipei*, a stop in *Qingshui* and/or *Dajia* 大甲 where other relatives from his father's side reside. But, we would always stop in *Taizhong* city where the *guzhang's* wife, the first son and his daughter moved a few years ago. No matter whether it was *Qingshui*, *Dajia* or *Taizhong*, the 'ritual' would always be the same: go somewhere with friends and relatives to eat some local special dishes. Time was never a problem. I remember that once we arrived in *Taizhong* at eleven o'clock at night. At twelve, we were in a restaurant, at two o'clock in the morning we left for *Yongxing* village.

Time was never a problem for Adam's *guzhang* either. He would always wait for us in his three-side house, smoking his Taiwanese or Japanese cigarettes, enjoying a glass of anything with some alcohol in it, and watching Taiwanese or Japanese TV channels. His television, in fact, has cable connected.

'You do not need to bring presents,' he would tell me each time with his friendly, but often, serious expression. But I had learned that a small present given to a Taiwanese, although always accepted with reticence and without too much eulogising (often it is not even opened in the presence of the giver), is always treasured as is the giver, especially if he or she 'comes from afar.'

A-Ma, the *guzhang*'s mother, a lively and always smiling grand-ma, would come in with the unmistakable sound of her footsteps, **'Oh, you have arrived!'**

'A-Ma how are you? Are you going out for your usual walk?', I would ask. She would smile. I knew she was well. **'It is time to get some sleep,'** the *guzhang* would say. In one of his Taiwanese-style bedrooms we would sleep a few hours before enjoying the company of the villagers and the charm of Yongxing scenery.

Since my first visits to Yongxing village I have had the feeling of being welcomed. This feeling very soon grew more profound and I started to 'feel at home.' It is quite arduous to put in writing the sequence of all the episodes that led me to sense this feeling of being at home. I can only say that everything happened so quickly and, I must admit, I enjoyed such a feeling. It is also true that the Taiwanese give 'friends who come from afar' a special treatment, a warm friendship that helps one to endure the fact of being away from one's own home. I tried to repay this friendship as much as I could.

*In this atmosphere of trust, my desire to conduct fieldwork in Yongxing village was not only well accepted, but even encouraged. While still in Taipei for my fieldwork in Datong district, Lai guzhang would often ask Adam, 'So, when is A-Diong coming?'*¹

There is surely a time in the process of conducting fieldwork in which anthropologists want to collect, almost obsessively, as much data as they can in order to go back to their academic institutions and publish the results of their research. I experienced such a time too, but, fortunately, it did not override a more genuine anthropological attitude towards other people and other cultures. To me, conducting fieldwork in Yongxing village would surely be an important step towards the completion of my PhD thesis. More importantly, however, it would be an attempt at understanding the lives of some people living in Taiwan who had become friends, and of a place that had become like my own home. This attitude, I hoped, would go well beyond the spatial and temporal contingency of an anthropological fieldwork.

¹ People in the village would usually address me as A-Diong 阿中, which is the Taiwanese pronunciation of the last character of my Chinese name (戴德中).

Going over my fieldwork notes, my eyes pause, once again, on the suggestion that Adam gave me before starting fieldwork in Yongxing village. *'Be natural in your way of collecting data. Neither be formal, nor too inquisitive, but slowly help the discussion on topics that you would like to know about in an atmosphere of friendship and trust. People in the city are more business oriented - there are exceptions, however. They do not have much time, so you should choose the right time and attitude to receive good information. People in the countryside - especially elderly people - have more time and if you are well introduced - have the right connection - they will love to spend time with you and talk about their lives, their places, their Tudi Gongs. I will teach you the art of drinking tea.'* I had the feeling that by chance - or by fate, as people would say in Taiwan - I had the right connection.

My visits to Yongxing, prior to my two-month fieldwork in the village, had already allowed me to start building a picture of the social geography of the place as well as a sketchy kinship chart of the two families I had come to know through Adam: the *Lai* 賴 and the *Lin* 林. By the time I started my fieldwork, I was almost able to locate the various components of the two families in their places (*Taipei, Dajia, Qinqshui, Taizhong, Shuili, Yongxing*) and had already become familiar with a good number of them.

Getting acquainted with the inhabitants of the small village came as an expected consequence. I had the feeling that people already knew of an Italian friend of the *Lai* that, every now and then, would reside in the village. My walking - often with some members of the *Lai* family - on the two small streets of the village could not pass unnoticed. *'Come and sit with us,'* I would hear so many times. And they would really mean it. I supposed communication was established and in the future I would always have a cup of tea ready and friends to chat with. I could not but recall to mind the advice Adam gave me about the attitude to have during fieldwork.

The fact of being a friend from afar who could speak their own language - although my Taiwanese was rather passive - having good connections with a family living there, listening to their stories and memories of their past, made me, in a relatively short time, a friend whose company they could enjoy. And, I enjoyed theirs, too.

Any anthropologist would surely question the fact that a two-month fieldwork would not be long enough to have a clear picture of the human, social and religious geography of Yongxing village. I would only partly share this criticism. Even before starting my fieldwork, I found myself having already a fairly good knowledge of the place I would research. The brevity of my stay, I would add, was compensated for by the intensity of the human relationships I had already managed to establish during the previous years. My knowledge of Yongxing village is, still now, continuing through the contacts, the sharing of information, my attempt to reorganize the material I was entrusted with.

There is more to add. My ethnographic account will probably only capture a personal, perhaps idiosyncratic, sense of life in Yongxing village at a specific point in time and space. The understanding of a specific place, that I see as an ongoing process, overcomes the boundaries of the written word. The ever-changing practice of everyday life as well as the personal and collective memories of the past - which can be interpreted differently by people at different stages of their lives - ceaselessly offer new elements to people's representations and senses of their places.

I was given, almost as a gift, an imagined place in the village. **'From now on your life will be mingled with ours,'** I was told. Although several months have already gone by and I find myself in another place, the memory of those days is still intense. The faces of the people of Yongxing, their village, their *Tudi Gong* will hopefully return, one by one, among the lines of my account. They have never left my heart. I only wish I could be there. I miss their tea.

2.2 My good friend Lai guzhang and his family

It was quite interesting when I had to choose the term to address Mr. *Lai* of Yongxing village. To call him Mr. *Lai* would have been too formal, as it would have been too informal to call him by his name. My best alternative would be to address him as *guzhang*, as Adam, the friend who had introduced me to the family, would call him. This is what I opted for and it seemed to work. My relationship and my place in the *Lai* family, would, then, be that of a fictive nephew: I called A-Ma the *guzhang's* mother and addressed both the *guzhang's* wife and older sister as A-Go 阿姑. I would call the two sons of *Lai guzhang* by their names, and his only daughter *meimei* 妹妹 (younger sister). They all would address me as A-Diong, a very friendly Taiwanese way of calling close friends and relatives.

In the practice of everyday life, people in Taiwan often address each other with terms taken from the highly sophisticated customary rules of Chinese kinship relationships. I have also heard such terms addressed to people met for the first time.

There is a tendency, in other words, to establish a kind of fictive kinship relationship with non-kin through the employment of terms such as 'uncle or aunt,' 'younger/older sister or brother,' 'grandma or grandpa,' etc.. What is unfamiliar, then, starts to become familiar through a term that, per se, expresses relationship. People in Taiwan - and Chinese in general - are very quick in establishing what kind of relationship could exist between 'I and thou' by analogy with kinship relationships genealogically reckoned. I had to learn this, too.

Often I thought: 'is this custom based on an underlying collective Chinese "sense of the other" as if he/she were part of one's own family? Could it tell us something of the way

people in Taiwan imagine and tend to practice human relationships? Would this have any impact on the way they construct spatiality in everyday life, in a specific urban neighbourhood or rural village?' These questions would specially return to my mind any time people in Taiwan would address me in this way and vice versa.

Each time I went to Yongxing village, I always enjoyed *guzhang's* (uncle's) company. Having spent almost all his 63 years in the village - except for a few years spent in *Taizhong* and *Taipei* - he was very keenly aware of all the changes happening in his *Yongxing* village over recent decades. We would talk for hours on a variety of topics. The other members of his family were a bit puzzled at the fact that we would spend so many hours together.

Adam would tell me, *'it seems that guzhang enjoys your company, otherwise he would not spend so much time talking. He is a man of few words.'* Some of the other members of the family would sometimes tease him, *'let A-Diong go to see some other places.'*

But we would carry on chatting. His stories would tell me more than visiting some places would. His senses of 'Taiwanese things' past and present started to guide me towards a deeper understanding of life in the small village of *Yongxing* as well as toward a sense of the meaning of 'being Taiwanese.'

I had the feeling that *guzhang* understood quite clearly the topic of my research and the way I wanted to conduct my fieldwork. On several occasions he told me: *'you know, I do not understand much about religion. I respect all religions. To me they are all good. I cannot, however, accept extremes and wars because of religion.'*

His feelings about it would then touch on his personal life. *'In my life I have just tried to be a good man, and to be a good man means to know what is good and what is bad. I just believe in what my ancestors believed in (我的祖先信什麼，我就信什麼). In my view there is no need to worship: sometimes I do it because of my mother.'*

Regarding my research, he would then say, *'I admire what you are doing and I want to help you. My house is your house. Please, feel at home when you are here. I will try to introduce you to people in the village and my friends from other villages. Do not be afraid to walk in the village and talk with the people. They already know what you are doing. I am sure that they will tell you anything they know about our Tudi Gong and our village. Enjoy your stay in our village and do not worry about anything. My mother will take care of us.'*

A-Ma, born in 1909, is the oldest lady in the village. She did not talk much but I had the feeling that her presence and smile would tell you more than her words could express. She was really taking good care of us.

After her usual early morning walk with her friends, she would have breakfast and a few cigarettes. I could hear her moving around, planning and starting to prepare the meals for the day. Neighbours would often come, bringing some fresh vegetables and stopping for a chat

with the eldest lady in the village. A few questions about me would always come in the discussion.

Noon and six o'clock in the evening were the 'sacred' times. No matter where I was or what I was doing, I would go back to *A-Ma* and wait for her call, '**A-Diong jia peng**' (*A-Diong* lunch is ready). I shared the regularity of her life by being present and enjoying her meals that she would prepare with great care. She would let us eat first. '**She never changes,**' *guzhang* would point out, '**She has always been like that.**'

Any time I would go back home from the village *A-Ma* would ask, '**A-Diong, have you been to worship** (拜拜) ?' She also knew what I was doing in the village, but would associate my research with the actual practice of worshipping *Tudi Gong*. She had a good point in assuming that. The fact of worshipping *Tudi Gong* yourself may give you a deeper perspective from which to look at Him. For *A-Ma* I should not just be a kind of observer of people's senses of and practices associated with *Tudi Gong*, but also a worshipper who would ask for the local *Tudi Gong*'s protection.

There is a cultural logic in her question: although I had moved temporarily to *Yongxing* village, I should inform *Tudi Gong* of my change of address. I should also ask for his protection to be extended to the *Lai* family and to the entire village. After all, I was living on the land that *Yongxing* village *Tudi Gong* was taking care of.

Life with *A-Ma* and *guzhang* was quite informal. We would keep an eye on each other. They would treat me as one of them and, as a son or a nephew would do, I took care of some of the small businesses of everyday life.

Every night I would burn wood behind the house, under a metal water warmer, so that everybody could have a shower; on Monday mornings before seven o'clock I would carry the rubbish to a collecting place not far from the *Tudi Gong* temple; I would go to buy, every now and then, some drinks at one of the two small shops nearby, do the washing up, etc.

On Sundays we would have lunch a bit later. '**A-Diong on Sundays you have to watch a short programme on Tudi Gong.**' Every Sunday, at noon, in fact, there has been a ten-minute programme that has been going on for several years. Stories on *Tudi Gong* and *Tudi Po*, His wife, are shown on television. Thanks to *A-Ma* I came to know about it. *A-Ma*, however, does not know yet that in the following months I managed to go to TTV television - one of the three Taiwanese televisions - and interview the two people in charge of the series. I will write about this later in my account.

A-Ma is adored, I would say worshipped, by her relatives, especially her grandchildren. Although all of them are scattered all over Taiwan, they would telephone as well as go and see her quite often. '**A-Ma has always taken good care of us, now it is time we take good care of her**', I was told several times. '**A-Ma now you have a new nephew,**' some of her relatives would joke with her. She would just look at me and smile.

From *Lugu* 鹿谷, *A-Ma* entered the *Lai* family at around 20 years-old. A picture of a handsome young man in the living room still reminds her of the fact that her husband died too soon and

too young. I noticed that when we used to watch television together, sometimes her eyes would meet for an instant her husband's eyes and then have a quick glance at me. I would not ask anything but only be present, in silence.

Although his appearance would not always show it, *guzhang* is a very sensitive man. He would talk with passion about his Taiwan and, at the same time, disclose a sense of nostalgia for things that would never happen again. ***'The Japanese did very good things in Taiwan. I like talking in Taiwanese or in Japanese. I do not like the Chinese language.'***

In a few words he would let you know his feeling and on what side of the complicated Taiwanese political scenario he stands. One of the first times I went to see him, in the evening we watched a television documentary on the February 28th, 1947 incident. Some of his friends were killed, or imprisoned on that day by the *Guomindang* 國民黨 (the Nationalist party) authorities and, since then, his sense of a Taiwanese identity has grown stronger and bitter over the years.

He is also extremely proud of his Japanese education and, still now, he keeps abreast, through television and newspapers, of everything that has a Japanese flavour. *Lai guzhang* seems to have been a powerful man a few decades ago. His knowledge of the place and his connections in the village and beyond show all that. He also has good relationships with one of the nine major aboriginal tribes in Taiwan: the *Bunong* 布農, who live on the mountains around *Yongxing* village. His three-side Taiwanese-style house occupies the most beautiful place in the geography of the village.

Often, he seemed to show a sense of sadness over the changes that he himself, his family and his Taiwan have gone through over the last fifty years. *Zhi-Yi*, the eldest son, one evening told me, ***'my father lives in the past. He still seems to live in an agricultural society when his family was a powerful one and he himself had very many connections in Taiwan and in the area. He does not seem to accept that Taiwan has changed over the last forty years. When I was a child, I remember that every day we would have guests at our table. I too feel a strong attachment to this place. I hope one day I can refurbish this house and come back as often as I can. Living in the apartment we have in Taizhong is like living in a cage if you compare it with the freedom that I feel in this place.'***

Zhi-Yi now lives in *Taizhong*, where he moved with his mother and sister a few years ago. He would often go back to *Yongxing* to see his father and *A-Ma*. In *Taizhong* he works at the Museum of Natural Science and sometimes helps his mother who has opened a clothes shop in *Taizhong* city. *Meimei* also lives in *Taizhong* where she teaches English in a school. She is also very good at Japanese, having attended a school that specialises in teaching Japanese as a second language. *Meimei* attempted to work in *Taipei* for a while, but decided to go back to *Taizhong*, first spending a couple of months in the village. ***'I did not manage to get used to living in Taipei. There is a different way of experiencing human relationships from that which I had learned in my youth in the village of Yongxing.'***

Zhi-Ren, the second son, has moved to *Taipei* (*Zhonghe* 中和) with his wife. He works in a car company in *Xinzhu* 新竹. He married on the 4th December 1994 in the village and I was invited to and attended his wedding.

Zhi-Ren's wedding

I already knew that *Zhi-Ren's* wedding was going to be a significant celebration for the *Lai* family and the village of *Yongxing*. It would also attract all the connections that the family had established over the years. They would all meet, once again, to celebrate a family event and to 'give face' (給面子) to *guzhang*. **'He deserves it. He has always been a good man,'** I was told. The atmosphere grew like a crescendo until the 3rd December, the day that saw all the relatives and friends of the family reunited together in *Yongxing* village for the final arrangements.

I started to experience this atmosphere with Adam's family. His parents, his younger sister and brother and himself had to take care of the wedding car, the arrangements of the flowers, the photos and the make-up of the bride, as Adam's sister is a beautician. As we were to leave early in the morning (3rd December), Adam invited me to spend the night with his family. Adam, his mother, his younger brother and myself left in the morning, while his father and younger sister followed us later in the day. The journey southwards had a quick stop in *Qingshui* for lunch and after a couple of hours we reached our destination.

The three-sided Taiwanese-style compound looked different to me. More than forty round red tables had already been prepared and an orange tarpaulin to provide protection from rain or sun had been stretched between the sides of the house above the tables. An aura of reddish brightness was colouring people and things, and the feeling that something was about to happen had already imbued the air. **'Come and have something to eat. Is it the first time that you have attended a traditional wedding in Taiwan? Finally you can meet all our relatives and friends. They will all come to the wedding,'** A-Go, the *guzhang's* wife and her sister were telling me.

Quite a few people were already having something to eat. The wedding was to be the following day, I thought, how come.... My thought had not ended before Adam said, **'You should know by now that eating together is very important for us. Everybody who comes for a visit or to help has to sit down for a bite. That's the way with which the family of the groom is thanking everybody for the friendship and help.'**

A-Ma was at a table with all her early morning walk friends. **'A-Ma, li ho** (how are you)?'. A friendly smile would be followed by a variety of questions that A-Ma's friends would ask her about me. She looked quite proud to answer them.

After I was introduced to other relatives and friends, *guzhang* came. He had just been to *Shuili* 水里 with *Zhi-Ren*, to pay a visit to the family of the bride just arrived from *Hualien* 花蓮. They were staying in a hotel in *Shuili* waiting for the Sunday morning when the bride would have to be collected by her future husband and relatives.

'I am very happy you have come,' guzhang said. The way we were talking gave some of the people, I was told later, the feeling that I was, somehow, part of the family.

By early evening almost everybody had arrived and I was told that we would soon start to prepare the small family shrine, located in the middle of the house. Young and old, relatives and friends, all were helping and suggesting the way the shrine should be decorated. The various suggestions eventually reached some kind of consensus as to what to write on the red-coloured rectangular cloth-banners which would then adorn the walls of the temple.

Mr. Lai 賴, a relative of the family and teacher of art in the secondary school of *Shuili*, was in charge of writing the augural scrolls. *A-Ma* would come in every now and then. She would not say a word but make ensured that things were done properly and 'according to tradition.'

Mr. Lai later on told me, ***'traditional Taiwanese customs are handed down in a variety of ways, depending on the place where one has lived and lives now and according to one's generation. These ways, however, only differ slightly.'*** I noticed that each augural scroll had the names of the brothers and sisters of the mother of the groom. I could not help asking Mr. Lai the reason for that.

'There is a Taiwanese saying which goes: 天上天公王、地下母舅公, in Heaven Tian Gong is the king, on the earth the uncles from the mother's side are those to be most respected.' Usually, it is also the mother of the groom - in our case *A-Go*, the mother of *Zhi-Ren* - who has to inform the local *Tudi Gong* of such family events which are about to happen in the village.

Everything was almost ready in the small village of *Yongxing*. Adam's mother with some relatives had just finished preparing the flowers at a nearby house. The cars were ready for the following day. Everybody would have a hot shower and a bed that night. The hospitality of the village - and of Taiwanese people in general - will never cease to surprise me.

The time was also a favorable one. It had been chosen on purpose: the Saturday, 3rd December 1994 was the 11th month, 1st day of the lunar calendar, and the day of the wedding, 4th December, would be the 2nd day of the 11th month. But for some of us the day had not yet finished. With *Zhi-Ren* we went to *Shuili* for a late snack.

Sunday, 4th December 1994, the 2nd day of the 11th lunar month, would become a memorable day for the *Lai* and the entire village of *Yongxing*. Everything had been prepared with great care by relatives and friends. At ten o'clock with a dozen cars - I do not remember seeing small ones - we left the village heading for *Shuili*, located a few kilometers away, on the other side of the river.

On the right side of the wedding car there was a long branch on which a white carrot and a small bag containing raw pork meat had been hung. I was told that it is used to wish good luck to the couple. I was not able to solicit a more comprehensive explanation from the people I asked. Inside one of the rooms of the hotel the 'exchange' took place: presents, red envelopes, and indeed the bride that now *Zhi-Ren* was allowed to take home. The agreement between the

two families was 'signed' not without fireworks and the tears of some members of the bride's family.

The majority of the relatives and friends of *Zhi-Ren* were waiting in *Yongxing*, ready to welcome the couple. Before the wedding banquet *Zhi-Ren* and his spouse worshipped for a few minutes in the ancestral family temple: ancestors and gods were thanked and made aware of the beginning of a new family.

Tudi Gong was specially worshipped: He would take care of them, as if He Himself were registering the marriage with the celestial hierarchy, and intervene with the celestial powers to seek abundant blessings on the newly married couple. The incredible variety of Taiwanese-style dishes matched well with the diversity of people that were at the banquet. I could not but enjoy both.

During the conversation with several people, the topic of our discussion often turned to *Tudi Gong*. ***'I cannot believe that our Tu-di Gong could become a topic for a PhD thesis,'*** I was told. ***'Do you have Tudi Gongs in your country? How come have you chosen this topic? What have you learned about it so far?'***

As a general feeling, I have to point out the diversity of reactions I had to the fact that I was researching on Tudi Gong. While in Taipei the majority of people I met would often, incredulously, laugh at hearing the topic of my PhD thesis - there were exceptions, however; in the countryside or people from the countryside living in the city, would take it more seriously and, to a certain extent, become involved in it. 'You know, the Tudi Gong temple we have in our place....', with these words a short introduction to their place and Tudi Gong would be given. Personal and/or community anecdotes would be recalled which would usually be followed by an invitation. 'Why don't you come to our place and visit our Tudi Gong temples?'

Mr. Zeng 曾, the husband of the younger sister of Mrs. Lai, during the wedding banquet told me that in *Dajia* there is a small temple dedicated to *Tudi Gong*. This temple is located very close to the secondary school where he teaches mathematics. Its *Tudi Gong* is thought to be very *ling* by the people in the neighbourhood.

'Almost five years ago, he continued, I had a student who was really a rascal. One day he went to the temple and ripped off Tudi Gong's beard. He then burnt it. Some neighbours saw it and reported the incident to the boy's parents. The parents were very sorry for what their boy had done and, as soon as possible, went to buy a new beard for Tudi Gong. All the people in the neighbourhood, especially those who used to worship regularly at the temple, were frightened by that incident. Some time later, the boy had an accident in the area and died. Still today, people in the neighbourhood link the death of the boy to his lack of respect towards Tudi Gong.'

Mr. Zeng wanted to accompany me to visit that temple. He arranged that on the way back to *Taipei* we would stop in *Dajia*. The wedding ceremonial was almost completed. After the

various family photos, *Zhi-Ren* and his wife offered tea, especially to their relatives. They would receive the cup back filled with Taiwanese dollars. After some photos with my good friend *Lai guzhang* and some other relatives, Adam, a son and a daughter of A-Go (the older sister of *guzhang*) and myself left *Yongxing* village. ***'Do not forget that I will be waiting for you,'*** the *guzhang* whispered.

That same evening we went to the small temple in *Dajia*, which Mr. *Zeng* had talked about. He and his wife had already arrived. We went to the temple but did not find the statue of *Tudi Gong*. There were two small statues of *Tudi Gong* on the left side of the altar and some empty space in the middle. ***'There, in the middle, there should have been the statue of the Tudi Gong I told you about,'*** Mr. *Zeng* said. The shrine also had a gate to prevent people from going inside and stealing the statues. Mr. *Zeng's* wife stressed that it was not like that a few weeks before.

What had happened to the real statue of Tudi Gong? Had it been stolen and the gate been put there to prevent further theft of other statues? Had, as it is often the case in Taiwan, that statue of Tudi Gong been 'borrowed' for a time because it was believed to be particularly efficacious (ling)?

I was about to take some photos. Mr. *Zeng* told me, ***'please, do not forget to ask Tudi Gong's permission, if you want to take some photos.'*** I felt that he also thought that that temple's *Tudi Gong* - although not in situ at that time - is quite powerful and His *ling* very efficacious.

Before reaching *Dajia*, we stopped at an extremely tiny *Tudi Gong* temple which was located, I suppose, at the outskirts of *Qingshui*. The dark evening contrasted with the blinding light coming from a 100 klwts bulb which was hanging in the temple. There were some offerings of fruits - it was the 2nd day of the 11th lunar month - and a dish of sand that is used for gambling. Mr. *Zeng* seemed not to be too happy when he saw it.

A Tudi Gong who takes revenge against a boy that has ripped off his beard, who is 'used' by gamblers to indicate what numbers could be played in lotteries - both in Taiwan and Hong Kong - and, in case he fails, would be thrown away or have his body mutilated, seems to contrast with the picture of the 'jolly and lovely old man' which characterises the representations of Tudi Gong in Taiwan.

Mr. *Zeng* appeared not to be willing to talk about 'the other side' of *Tudi Gong* cults. I did not try to ask anything else of Mr. *Zeng*. We both greeted the *Tudi Gong* of that place and I followed the quick steps of Mr. *Zeng* back.

Several of Adam's relatives, who had just come back from the wedding, were waiting for us in a restaurant in *Qingshui*. They would not let us leave for *Taipei* without enjoying, once again, both food and friendship.

Zhi-Ren's wedding had surely made *guzhang* very proud. Relatives, friends and the whole village of *Yongxing* would remember that day, and I would too. It was also a very productive time for my future longer stay in the village. ***'So when are you coming to stay with us? Remember that you will always be welcome,'*** the wife of *Lin cunzhang* 林村長 told me after the wedding. A few more months would go by before leaving, once again, for *Yongxing* village.

2.3 *Yongxing : the village and its people*

I did not leave alone for my six-week fieldwork in *Yongxing* village. Adam, his sister, and some relatives from *Qingshui* came to my house for an Italian meal. Then, together, we left for *Qingshui*. Adam's sister, however, could not come with us. *Jason Wu*, his wife and small son live in *Taipei* where *Jason* is the chairman of a company. They, however, often go back to *Qingshui* to see their parents as well as to balance the haste of *Taipei* city life with a more human, slow pace of life. ***'Making money at all costs is not the only thing that counts in life. There is more to it than that. I wish I could come and stay with you in Yongxing,'*** *Jason* told me.

After a quick night snack at their house in *Qingshui*, Adam and myself left for *Taizhong*. *A-Go*, *Zhi-Yi*, *Zhi-Ren* and *meimei* were waiting for us. We did not stop for long. It was already late and we wanted to reach *Yongxing* by early morning.

'I am sorry I cannot be in Yongxing to take care of you. I hope you get used to life there. It is a very simple life,' *A-Go* said.

A-Go was probably trying to say something about her own life and her feelings about the small village. As I understood later, she has always found it a bit difficult to live in *Yongxing* village. There may be other reasons as well.

Zhi-Ren and *meimei* came with us to *Yongxing*. In the village, with *A-Ma* and *guzhang* there was also *A-Go*, the elder sister of *guzhang*. She would remain there for a week.

'Finally you have arrived,' *guzhang* told me, ***'my house is your house, so feel free and especially feel at home.'*** The fact that he is not a very ceremonious man, made his words even more genuine.

Life in Yongxing village would be very 'casual' (隨便) in almost everything, but not for human relationships. Here, one cannot live anonymously. To create and maintain good relationships with everybody in the village - and beyond - is felt more than in Taipei.

'Is it the geography of specific places that conditions human relationships or the opposite? What senses of place have people living in the city and in the countryside? What about their sense of community, identity, belonging? How are locales constructed in the practice of the city and countryside everyday life?' , I started asking myself.

This time I would stay longer in Yongxing village. I would not need to go back to Taipei with Adam and Zhi-Ren. The thought of it was enticing. Besides, there was no need to prepare plans on how and where to start my fieldwork. I had started long before and I would only have to continue with the attitude in mind that I would not force people and places for the sake of my fieldwork. I also knew that life in Yongxing village goes by at an extremely slow pace. It surely would be quite different from Taipei city life where I had just spent almost a year on my fieldwork. I felt I would enjoy that 'sudden reduction of speed.'

In the late morning, Zhi-Ren said, ***'A-Diong shall we go for a walk in the village? I would like to show you a few things.'***

Zhi-Ren is a very easy-going person. Everybody likes him in the village. His wedding made Yongxing extremely *renao* 熱鬧 (alive) for a few days as it was before and still is in the memories of the past of several elderly people.

In between greeting the various people we were meeting on the narrow street of the village, Zhi-Ren told me, ***'you know, I have always enjoyed living in Yongxing. There is space here and the pace of life is more human. A-Ma, for example, does not manage to stay in Taizhong more than a week. She likes the open spaces... and myself, I have to come back every now and then to see my father, my A-Ma, and my place. I often bring friends here. The beauty of this place has to be shared.'***

Zhi-Ren is surely right. Anybody would be lured by the Yongxing scenario. Although a few kilometers away from Shuili and Yongfeng 永豐, Yongxing seems to be located in a far-away and untouched place. Looking at it from the other side of the river, the village appears literally submerged by vegetation. It is only when you start crossing the narrow bridge that you become aware of the presence of a settlement. The physical configuration of the village is very regular and compact. The street embraces the whole village forming a square on which houses are located.

Nothing appears to be missing. People, houses, dogs, temples, tombs, trees, mountains, river, often a clear sky, seem to merge giving the spectator a sense of cleanness and balance.

Several people in the village - and some from outside- pointed out to me the 'good' geomancy of Yongxing. Mr. Xiao 蕭, an elderly man about seventy-year old, told me, ***'have you noticed the configuration of this place? The mountains almost form a circle around our village. I like it very much. My sons and daughters did not want to leave Yongxing when they married. They had to, however. But they often come back. They, too, like this place very much.'***

Zhi-Ren, then, continued by introducing the various temples in the village and an activity connected with one of them, *'in the village there are three temples: one is dedicated to Tudi Gong; another to Lin Peng, the founder of this place; the third temple to the Twelve Ancient Heroes. For the cult of Tudi Gong and Lin Peng, I think in the village there should still be a wooden plaque (木板) circulating among the families living here. Do not forget to ask for it.'*

'Zhi-Ren, do you know how many families live in Youngxing village,' I asked.

'There should be a few more than one hundred,' he answered. *'But, I am not completely sure. You know in the countryside people come and go. The movement towards the city has been tremendous over the last years. You should ask the Lin cunzhang (the 'village head').'*

I had the feeling that it would have been quite a trial to establish, exactly, the number of people that actually live in Yongxing village. As Lin cunzhang pointed out, *'not even we ourselves know the precise number, and if we were to find out, the number could change next week.'*

I would first need, I thought, an understanding of the changing administrative boundaries as they have happened over the years in the locality. In other words, I would probably need to merge 'official' data with the memories of the past of the people of Yongxing village. This would allow me to build a social and historical picture of the place in question. I have to point out that, despite my continuous searches, I have not yet found any complete written material on Yongxing village. My data, then, are mainly based on conversations I had with the people of Yongxing. The official data were kindly provided and 'constructed' during meetings I had with Lin cunzhang and Mr. Li 李, who is the local government official for Yongxing village as well as Pingling 坪林 and Xinglong 興隆.

Lin cunzhang had been chosen as mayor of the village two years ago. He is not a native of Yongxing, he only moved to the village a few years ago with his wife and four children. Two of them have now married and do not reside in the village, one is doing military service, and the other one is studying.

Lin cunzhang is the owner of one of the two shops in Yongxing. It is a mini supermarket which is located on the ground floor of his three-floor house. Close to the shop and connected through a door there is the *cunzhang* 'office'. It is more like a meeting place where people from the village and friends from outside feel free to come, have tea and chat together. I have often enjoyed the hospitality of *Lin cunzhang* and his wife.

It was there that near the beginning of my stay in the village *Lin cunzhang*, Mr. *Li, guzhang* and myself met to 'clarify' some 'official' data on the historical development of *Yongxing* village and its administrative link with neighbouring villages.

Before 1955, *Yongxing*, *Pingling* and *Xinglong* used to form a united administrative territory belonging to *Lugu xiang* 鹿谷鄉. These three villages are only 5-6 kilometers away from each other. With the construction of the bridge that now connects *Yongxing* with *Yongfeng* 永豐 and *Shuili*, the three villages passed under the jurisdiction of *Shuili Xiang*. It became much easier for people to reach *Shuili*'s government office and shops by just crossing the newly built bridge than to go to *Lugu*. That happened during the year 1955 (民國 44). After a couple of years *Xinglong* was separated, administratively, from *Yongxing* and *Pingling*. Up to now, these are still joined in the same administrative territory. *Lin cunzhang* takes care of both villages. On the 3rd July 1995, the population of *Yongxing - Pingling* and *Xinglong* was as follows:

FT1. Official population records: *Yongxing-Pingling* and *Xinglong*

	<i>Families</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
<i>Yongxing-Pingling</i>	134	259	213
<i>Xinglong</i>	154	322	219

Source: Local government office for *Yongxing-Pingling* and *Xinglong*

The number of families and population is slightly higher in *Xinglong* and there is a visible difference between the number of men and women in both places. Of the 134 families of *Yongxing* and *Pingling*, 90 have their domicile in *Yongxing* and 44 in *Pingling*. Both villages are divided into *lin*: *Yongxing* has 4 *lin* with respectively 27, 21, 19 and 23 households in each, while *Pingling* has 3 *lin*.

Having their domicile in *Yongxing*, on which I concentrate my research, does not mean that the 90 families all reside in the village. I would surely agree with *Lin cunzhang* and Mr. *Li* on the fact that the continuous and high rate of social mobility of the people of *Yongxing*, and Taiwan in general, makes it almost impossible to know the exact number of families as well as people residing in a specific place at a specific time. How could I know, I asked myself, the approximate number of households who were actually residing in *Yongxing* without engaging in a door to door counting?

Some of the inhabitants themselves had already informed me about the population size and family compositions. The discrepancies and differences in their accounts were too significant to be ignored. Could it be that the people I had asked had different perceptions about my question confusing, perhaps, between those who were domiciled in the village, but absent, with

those who actually live there? Or, as *Lin cunzhang* and Mr. *Li* were suggesting, the social mobility has been and, to some extent, still is so high that it would be impossible to construct a clear picture of the situation. ***'Numbers change continuously.'***

I would put forward another reason which often emerged in chatting with several villagers. Could it be that the people actually living in *Yongxing* have an unconsciously 'extended' sense of their place, thus including also those who are not living there? Those, for example, who have moved permanently to another place and sometimes go back, and those who, for a variety of reasons, have moved out temporarily and are expected to go back?

Although, I reckon, my questions regarding number of families and population were quite straightforward, the majority of *Yongxing* people I asked gave a variety of reasons for the permanent or temporary absence of some of their fellow village people. The sense of the current inhabitants of the village towards those 'absent' and those 'present' seemed quite flexible. The fluctuation in 'numbers,' then, should have been almost predictable.

I heard that the wooden plaque, the *muban* that *Zhi-Ren* was talking about during our walk together in the village, has written on one side of it the names of the heads of the families living in the village. These, in turn, would take care of the worship of *Tudi Gong* and *Lin Peng*. I wanted to explore it a bit further. I asked *guzhang* if he knew about it.

'Yes, he answered, I finished my week just before you arrived. Now the muban is in the house of Mrs. Wang 王. She will take care of the worshipping of Tudi Gong and Lin Peng twice a day until next Sunday.'

'Guzhang, would it be possible to have a look at it?' I asked.

'This evening we will go to Mrs. Wang's house,' *guzhang* answered.

Mrs. *Wang* lives just down the road from *guzhang's* house. She is a very kind middle-aged woman who, I was told, lost her husband a few years ago. She works in *Shuili* and takes care of her son and the younger brother of her husband: *Xiao Wang* 小王.

Mr. *Chen* 陳, a young man living opposite to Mrs. *Wang's* house, came too and joined in the conversation. Mrs. *Wang* showed the wooden board to me. I was able to have a good look at it, take some photos and start to reconstruct with them a biography of what appeared to be, externally, just a rudimentary piece of wood. The meaning that people would attach to it as well as the mobility of its existence among the villagers would make it more redolent with meaning than its simple appearance.

I will introduce the *muban* in more detail in the next part. What I would like to point out here is the number of representatives of the families which are written on it.

First, it has to be said that the *muban* seems to have been made in the late 1970s. However, in the early 1990s it broke and was remade and inscribed with the names of families that were living in the village at that time and taking part in the worship of *Tudi Gong* and *Lin Peng*.

When I saw it there were 49 names written on it. They are the male heads of the families who were actually living in *Yongxing* village five or six years ago.

Are the people whose names are written on the muban still living in the village? What would happen to the rotation if some of them died? What if a new family moved in to the village? Do all the people who are actually living in the village take part in the Tudi Gong rotation worship?

I was allowed to borrow the *muban* for a couple of days. In the evenings, *guzhang* and I went through all the names written on it. The following is a sketchy indication of some changes - deaths and mobility - that have happened over the last 5/6 years among the inhabitants of *Yongxing* village.

1	2	3 Dead, to the wife	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Dead, to the son	11	12	13	14 Dead, to the son
15	16	17	18	19 Not at home	20	21	22	23	24 Dead, to the wife	25	26	27	28
29 Not at home	30	31 Has mo- ved	32	33 Dead, to the wife	34	35 Dead, to the son	36	37 Dead, to the wife	38	39	40 Dead, to the wife	41	42 Has mo- ved
43	44	45	46	47	48	49							

FT2. Backside view of the 'muban' (wooden plaque) used for the rotational worship of
Tudi Gong and Lin Peng

With the death of the head of the family the commitment to worship *Tudi Gong* and *Lin Peng* is passed on to the closest kin of the deceased residing in the village. The information above also shows those families that are either 'not at home' (note 19, 29), meaning that they have moved away temporarily, or that have moved permanently (note 31, 42). If we consider these two categories of families as not actually living in the village, the number of the families residing in *Yongxing* and who are engaged in the rotation warship decreases to 45.

Guzhang, however, pointed out that there is a family that belongs to a Christian denomination. They 'usually' do not worship and therefore their name is not on the *muban*. Three or four families live a little way away from the village. The *muban* is not passed on to them because **'it's not very convenient'** (不太方便), especially for elderly people, to walk twice a day to the *Tudi Gong* temple and to the *Lin Peng* shrine.

These data would increase the number of families living in the village to 49/50. The number of families engaged in the rotation worship would remain the same (45). The 3/4 families living a little out of the village, although not taking part in the rotation, would worship too, **'... and I feel that some members of the Christian family would worship Tudi Gong as well, every now and then and, especially, without being noticed,'** an elderly woman told me. **'Here in the village 99.9% of the people worship Tudi Gong,'** *guzhang* stressed.

On the *muban* there is room for other families to be added. **'In cases where new families move in to the village they would be asked whether they want to join in the rotation,'** the young Mr. *Chen* said.

As I have pointed out previously, the setting of the village appears very compact. The lines drawn by the narrow streets encircle the human and geographical settlement in a clear geometrical square. There is no chance of getting lost, as had happened to me several times in my fieldwork site in *Taipei* city. In a few minutes one is able to walk from the house of Mr. *Lai*, which is located at the northern end of the village, to the temple of *Tudi Gong*, the village activity centre and the tombs to the south-west.

From there one can walk to the other side of the village where the *Lin Peng* temple had been moved a few years ago. In between the two temples the bridge over the river takes you to *Yongfeng* and *Shuili* in 15/20 minutes by car. It takes almost half an hour on foot to reach the temple of the 'Twelve Ancient Heroes,' which is located on the mountain between *Yongxing* and *Xinglong*, from the back of *Lai guzhang*'s house.

Life in the small village of *Yongxing* takes place mainly on the two main streets and around the temple of *Tudi Gong*. Both streets provides a meeting point, a setting for social interactions, in other words a locale. Going out, villagers would naturally walk towards, pass by and often stop at these two locales. They also happen to be the only two shops in the village that sell a bit of everything. I have already introduced the mini supermarket of *Lin cunzhang* and the office which is connected to it: this resembles more a living room than an office. It is

there that villagers and friends from outside would go to look for *Lin cunzhang* or to stop for a chat and a cup of tea.

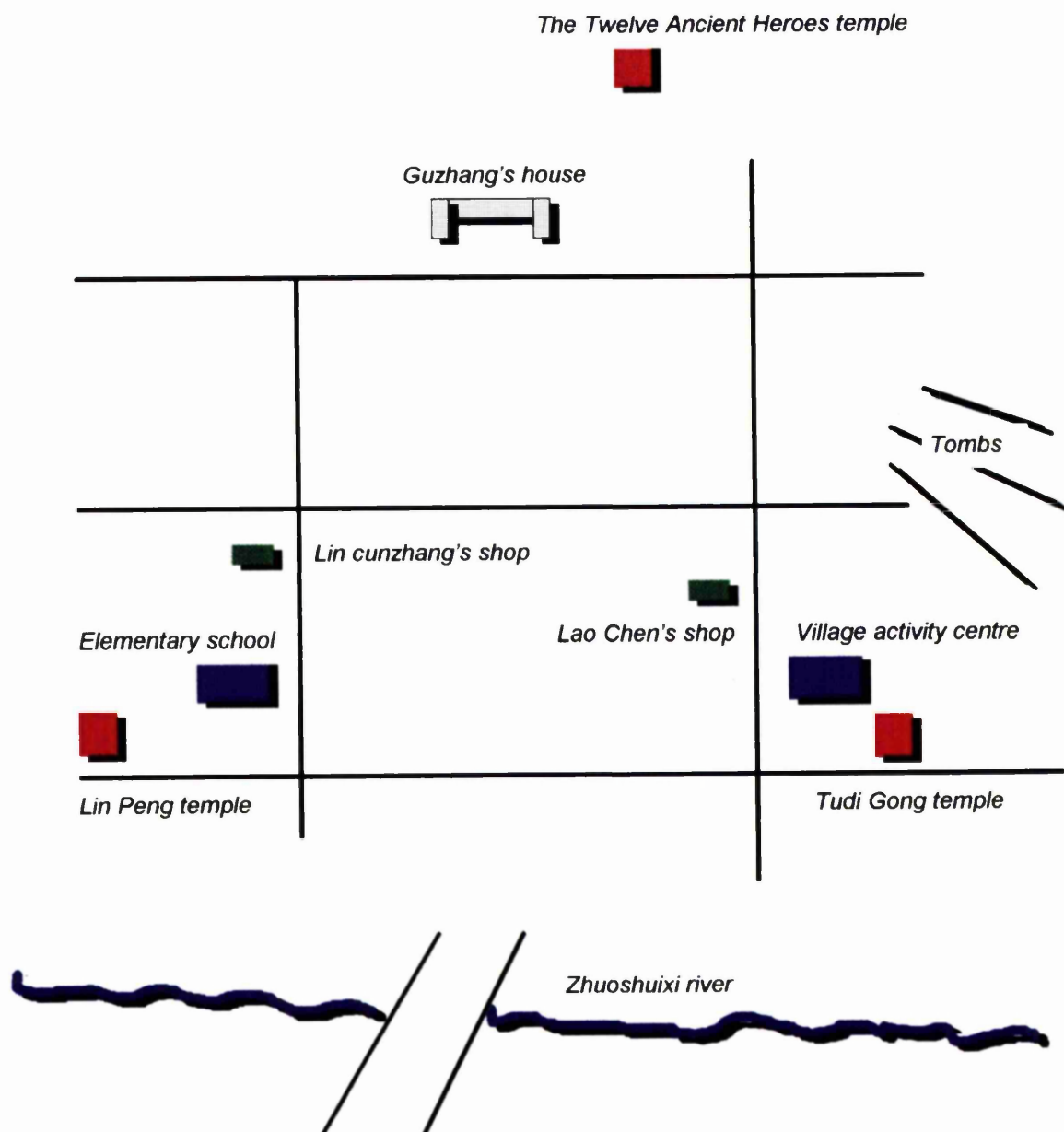
The other shop is owned by *Lao Chen* 老陳, a sixty-eight year old man, whom I used to call *A-Be* 阿伯.² He is a very learned person about *Yongxing* village. ***'You know that A-Be knows almost everything about this place, but he does not like to talk about it,'*** I was told by some of the frequenters of his shop.

It was true. *A-Be* would often show a sense of reticence with regard to talking about things that had happened in the village. His expression would suddenly turn sad and his voice tremble. Once, we were talking about what he remembered of his past in the village. After a few words he stopped and started to write characters on a piece of paper that he then gave to me. I have never been able to unravel those characters and I prefer to leave them as they are. The senses and memories of their past in *Yongxing* would remain with him and everybody who knows him seems to respect his silence.

He would, however, talk about more general things: dates, some stories, the fact that he was in the first group that graduated from the village elementary school. I was told that during the time I was in the village people would very often discuss in his shop things related to my research even when I was not present.

The two shops sell almost everything except meat. It is once a day, around 11 o'clock, that a small car with meat and vegetables comes to the village from the nearby *Shuili*. I learned to recognise it by its unmistakable sound, as I learned that of the postman who would come between 12 and 1 o'clock to deliver the mail as well as to collect letters from the 'only' mailbox located near the 'only' telephone box. These are placed in between the elementary school and *Lin cunzhang* shop. Any change of schedule could not pass unnoticed in the village.

² *A-Be* is the Taiwanese pronunciation of *A-Bo* 阿伯 (father's elder brother).

M17. Map of Yongxing village

Given its small size and its relative closeness to *Shuili*, there is no police station in *Yongxing*. There is, however, a spacious and well established elementary school which was started in 1948 (民國 37. 9. 1) as a branch of *Xiufeng Elementary School* 秀峰國小. It was called *Niuwenlu Branch* 牛輶橋分班, after the old name of the village.

In 1951 (民國 40. 9. 1) it became a branch of *Yongfeng Elementary School* 永豐國小 (today's *Yufeng Elementary School* 玉峰國小) and changed its name to *Yongxing Elementary Branch* 永興分班. In 1953 (民國 42. 9. 1) *Yongxing* branch became autonomous with the name of *Yongxing Elementary School* 永興國小, which was at that time under the jurisdiction of *Lugu xiang*. In 1955 (民國 44. 6. 1) it passed under *Shuili xiang* and retained the same name.

From the late fifties the school experienced a substantial burst of growth in the number of pupils. Mrs. *Lin* 林, who has been a teacher at the school for the last twenty years, said that in the early sixties more than three hundred students were attending classes in *Yongxing* village. Another Mr. *Chen* 陳, who had been *cunzhang* in the early sixties, stressed that, ***'at that time life in the village was extremely lively. Then the school had more than 300 students. They came also from Pingling and Xinglong.'***

At the moment there are just twenty-one students attending the Elementary School in the village. Six, however, have just graduated (June 1995) and five/six are attending the middle and high school in *Shuili*. There are six teachers, two secretaries and the headmaster.

Since 1968 (民國 57. 8. 1) *Xinglong* has its own elementary school, while *Pingling* prefers to send its students to *Shuili*. This is not the only reason for such a drastic decrease in the number of students of *Yongxing Elementary School*.

Teacher *Lin* pointed out that ***'in the seventies the village went through a stage of high social mobility. Parents with 4/5 children could not manage to divide their land among their sons. Each son would inherit too small a piece of land in the village to be able to start a new family. Young people, then, would move to the big cities, lured by the idea of making big money as well as forced by the circumstances in the village.'***

Teacher *Lin* moved to the village of *Yongxing* almost twenty years ago. She came from *Hualian* and married a man from *Yongxing*. Her husband is the only son in his family who has remained in the village with his parents, ***'my brothers have all left Yongxing. You should have seen our house at the Chinese New Year this year. All of them came back with their families. We had to prepare three big tables to have our meals.'***

This is not a unique case in *Yongxing*. On the contrary, it seems to be the norm. Each family in the village, in fact, has some of its members - often the majority - scattered all over Taiwan, especially in the three big cities: *Taibei*, *Taizhong* and *Gaoxiong*.

'What would the inhabitants of Yongxing village feel about the absence of so many members of their families? To what extent has such an absence influenced their senses of place? What kind of feelings would the return to the village of relatives and former

neighbours cause among the villagers?’ These are some of the questions that I have repeatedly asked myself and only indirectly asked the people of *Yongxing*. Quite often there would be no need to ask. Their feelings about the absence of family members would spontaneously and constantly surface in our chats, not without a sense of melancholy and nostalgia.

2.4 Tudi Gong, Lin Peng and the Twelve Ancient Heroes

The map of *Yongxing* village has already shown that there are three temples in the village. These occupy a specific position in the geography of the village as well as in the way villagers represent and talk about them. *Tudi Gong* and *Lin Peng* are the two village temples. These are located on two sides of the settlement and at a convenient walking distance from the villagers' houses. The *Twelve Ancient Heroes* temple, however, is positioned on the mountain which is in between *Yongxing* and *Xinglong*, a neighbouring village, and not easily accessible on foot for many villagers. Of the three, this temple is the most recently built with financial help from both sides. It is, therefore, a shared temple and ***'quite famous in the area and all over Taiwan because it is very ling,'*** I was told.

There is almost nothing written on these temples. The data I have managed to collect have all been constructed with the people of *Yongxing* and, to a certain extent, reflect the flexibility and ambiguity of oral traditions as well as the changes that have happened in the village over the last few decades.

The temple of the 'Twelve Ancient Heroes' 十二故君

'You know the temple of the Twelve Ancient Heroes is extremely ling. Farmers who have lost cows or any other animal would find them if they go to worship in that temple. It has happened so many times. It is true.' With her hands pointing towards the temple of the *Twelve Ancient Heroes* or the *Twelve Ancient Heroes* there on the mountain at the back of the village, a relative of *guzhang*, who lives in the opposite wing of the same three-sides house, was trying to explain to me in which field of people's everyday life the *Twelve Ancient Heroes* seem to be most helpful.

It has to do with lost cattle. ***'Oh no, guzhang stressed, not only cattle. I remember that many years ago, before we had the bridge, a friend of mine lost his ring in the water when crossing the river. He just prayed with his hands in direction of the temple and he found it.'*** Mr. Huang 黃, a friend of *guzhang* who used to work in *Yongxing*, added, ***'we would always say a prayer towards the temple before crossing the river.'***

It seemed to me that the help of the *Twelve Ancient Heroes* would be sought mainly in cases where animals and things would be lost and for safety in crossing the river. Similarly, to prevent people from being lost in the waters of the river that, at times, could be very dangerous. ***'Why would the Twelve Ancient Heroes be particularly asked for help in such cases?'*** I started to ask myself as well as the people of *Yongxing*.

There is an oral story which has been circulating in the village for generations regarding the *Twelve Ancient Heroes* temple. On purpose, I let several people tell me that story and the main components are the following:

- ***13 people were working on the mountain where the temple is currently located.***
- ***one of them went to buy food in the nearby village.***
- ***something happened: an earthquake, most probably.***
- ***when the one who went to buy food returned to the mountain, he could not find the twelve fellow workers.***

In each retelling of the story, the basic plot was enriched by new details that, sometimes, were elicited by my questions. The thirteen people seem to have been outsiders who moved to *Yongxing* to work. They were not farmers, however, as the majority of the people moving to *Yongxing* would be. It seems they were carpenters, skilled in making small chairs and tables. The man who returned to the mountain with the food could not even find their corpses. They had disappeared. The temple, in fact, does not contain the bones of any of the twelve people. ***'What had happened to the 12 workers? What about the one who went to buy food? Did all this really occur or is it just an allegory to explain something else?'***

Here the details start to be very vague and the line between history and imagination becomes very fragile. ***'You know, that happened more than 100 years ago.'*** I must have heard this expression several times and from different villagers during my fieldwork especially when attempting to fix an historical date to what I was told. It seems that when facts or events cannot be traced back by one's memory or substantiated by the knowledge of written sources, they are handed down to some point in time that it is usually prior to one's own date of birth. The more the years were added, the more the sense of what we were discussing was meant to have happened long before. I do not think I have been told a point in time which has been more than 300 years ago. For many villagers the expression ***'more than one hundred years ago'*** would often mean ***'this is what I have heard', 'my father used to say it to me.'***

For the majority of people who told me that story of the *Twelve Ancient Heroes*, it seems that the imaginary plot of it has prevailed on the real event that used to occur in the area. According to Teacher *Lai*, a relative of *guzhang* who lives in the neighbouring *Shulli*, the temple of the *Twelve Ancient Heroes* was built to remember *Han* people who were killed by aborigines living on the mountains around *Yongxing* village. Nobody in the village, however, expressed

this view. How that story started to be told, nobody seems to know. The suggestion of Teacher *Lai* does shed some light on it. But, as villagers did not go further in speculating about the historical fact behind the *Twelve Ancient Heroes* and their temple, I should not go further either. I just want to add that the temple is felt to belong to the village, but to a lesser extent than those of *Tudi Gong* and *Lin Peng*. A few conjectural answers might be found in the fact that the *Twelve Ancient Heroes* temple is not located in the village, that it is a shared temple, or that the *Twelve Ancient Heroes* were outsiders. One element, however, seemed to be mentioned quite often: *'that temple is very ling.'*

Is it still ling for people who have lost their cattle or things? Is it still ling in safeguarding the crossing of the river? I did not have the impression that people in the village sought this kind of help anymore. Technological innovation (for example the building of the bridge on the river), employment diversification (partly accounting for the absence of cattle in the village) and economic well-being (allowing one to buy again what has been lost) seem to have contributed to a process in which people's sense of attachment to the temple and its miraculous power has weakened.

I went to see the temple several times. An old photograph, located in the temple, depicting a simple altar with a small shrine, sharply contrasts with the refurbishment which has been done recently. The old Mr. *Chen*, who was *Yongxing cunzhang* in the early 1960s., told me that in 1983 the renovation of the two temples was finished with the help of both villages: *Xinglong* and *Yongxing*. It is now a well appointed compound that accommodates the *Twelve Ancient Heroes* temple as well as a *Tudi Gong* temple which is called 永隆宮. 永 *Yong* and 隆 *Long* stand for *Yongxing* village and *Xinglong* village. Every year, a combined celebration between the two villages is held on the 20th day of the 8th lunar month.

Lin Peng shrine 林朋祠

There is very little historical information regarding *Lin Peng*,³ a *Quanzhou* 泉州 native, who arrived in Taiwan and settled in *Lugang* 鹿港 at the beginning of the *Jiaqing* 嘉慶 period (from 1796 onwards). Having heard that the land in the locality of today's *Yongxing* village was very fertile, in 1811 he moved to the southern part of *Zhuzai jiaoshan* 竹仔腳山. His plan was to open up the area for farming. The irrigation system he managed to build was then destroyed by a flood caused by the river overflowing.

This did not prevent him from carrying out his plan. With a good number of farmers, he began a new *Han* settlement which, most probably, was given the name of *Niuwenlu* at that

³ The main historical information about *Lin Peng* has been taken from a few notes provided by Liu Zhi-Wan (1961:144-145). It has to be pointed out that the two characters for *Lin Peng* are presented as 林評 (*Ling Ping*) by Liu and as 林朋 (*Lin Peng*) on the marble plaque inside the temple.

time. However, *Lin Peng* was caught and then killed by aborigines living on the neighbouring mountains. Several villagers told me that according to oral traditions after his internal organs, possibly his heart, were found, local inhabitants built a small shrine to him, to remember his work for the village and for the locality.

Liu Zhi-Wan points out that the small shrine was built in 1869 (1961: 144), and was sited close to the *Tudi Gong* temple in the village. Due to the enlargement of the road near the *Tudi Gong* temple around twenty years ago, the *Kaiji Ci* 開基祠 was moved to its current location, on the right side of the village. The date of the construction of the new shrine dedicated to *Lin Peng* is 1973. The marble plaque inside the shrine is dedicated to *Kaijizu Lin Peng xiangwei* 開基祖林朋香位, the 'founding ancestor of the place.'

Tudi Gong temple 土地公廟

Around fifteen years ago there was a scarcity of water in Yongxing village. We thought of excavating a well which, we hoped, could solve the problem. In order not to waste money and time, we had to be very careful in choosing the right site for the well.

The need for water was urgent. Those in charge of the village water, together with the cunzhang, came to our Tudi Gong temple to ask for some indications from the deity. There was no answer from Tudi Gong.

Somebody suggested that elderly people, especially those who had been living in the village for a long time and were more familiar with both our Tudi Gong and our place, should be invited to ask Tudi Gong for help. In addition, a favourable time had to be chosen.

An eighty-year old A-Be 阿伯 was invited to the temple. After asking more than forty times using the divination blocks, Tudi Gong agreed to the excavation of the well and suggested the most likely site to look for water.

A villager

It was there, at the *Tudi Gong* temple, that I was told this story by one of the villagers. This episode does indeed indicate a sense of attachment as well as a sense of dependence and confidence that villagers feel towards their *Tudi Gong*. Any kind of family or community event has to be shared with Him. *Tudi Gong*, in fact, has to be informed of all the happenings in the village and asked for help especially for those complicated cases of everyday life, such as the one reported above. Sometimes *Tudi Gong* is also asked to solve family or community disagreements, thus becoming a kind of local magistrate whose 'verdict' is fair and generally accepted by the contenders. ***'He is the one in charge of the place...He knows the place...'***

He has been here from the beginning... .⁴ Such remarks affirm the localised and temporal authority of *Tudi Gong* with reference to the place or community in which He is sited.

The imagined authority which is felt towards *Tudi Gong* is quite often shown in the physical centrality of His temple in the geography of a specific place. In *Yongxing*, from the house of *guzhang*, it takes no more than a five minutes' walk to reach the *Tudi Gong* temple which is located on the left side of the village. In between the 濁水溪 *Zhuoshuixi* river, the tombs and the village activity centre,⁴ the temple offers a relaxing meeting point for the people of *Yongxing* to spend some time during the hot afternoons or in the fresh breeze of the summer evenings.

Just in front of the temple there is the stage on which the *Tudi Gong* theatre is performed once or twice a year. The stage was built in 1971, the year during which the old Mr. *Chen* was the *luzhu*.⁵ ***'We built the stage right in front of the temple to allow Tudi Gong to watch performances*** (給土地公看的),⁶ Mr. *Chen* said.⁶ Behind the temple, the sacred tree (神木) shades the whole site as well as several stone benches and tables.

Guzhang suggested that I should spend some time every day at the *Tudi Gong* temple. And so I did. There I enjoyed the company of the villagers and, as I experienced later, their willingness to introduce, each one in his/her own way, facts regarding their *Tudi Gong* and their village as well as excerpts from their personal and family narratives.

It was at the *Tudi Gong* temple that I heard, for the first time, the name 牛轆轤 *Niuwenlu*, which was the old appellation of the village. Later on, teacher *Lin* explained to me that in the past goods were transported by 'four-wheeled carriages' (牛車) pulled by water buffaloes (水牛). Close to the settlement at that time, the buffaloes would be immersed in the water for a while to relax from the heat of the day before continuing the journey. The old name of the village, therefore, captures the agrarian scene of water buffaloes playing in the water of the *Zhuoshuixi* river. The village seems to have been an important station on the communication route - especially from *Lugang* - between the lowland and the highland, between *Han* Chinese and aborigines.

I was told that the two stones behind the temple are all that is left of the 'first' *Tudi Gong* temple in the village. On one of them there are inscribed around thirty names of people who,

⁴ During fieldwork, the village activity centre was being refurbished. A second floor was to be added with financial help provided by the Government. Several villagers stressed that over the last few years there has been a stress on the island on 'rebuilding Taiwan' starting from local communities, especially in the countryside.

⁵ *Guzhang* told me that once a year (15th day of the 1st lunar month) villagers would choose the *luzhu* using the divination blocks just in front of the *Tudi Gong* temple.

⁶ The *Tudi Gong* theatre is usually performed on the 2nd day of the 2nd lunar month and/or the 15th day of the 8th lunar month.

presumably, were living there. However, nobody now living in the village recognizes them as their own ancestors. This very much surprises the villagers themselves, who so far have not managed to solve the intricacy of the names on the stone.

Such an intricacy, I was told, was made more exciting by the fact that 'a friend from afar' would be so much interested in it. Many people could tell me something about it, but the confusion and the 'mystery,' as some called it, would remain. The date displayed, however, gives an indication of the time of that settlement. As the carving on the stone was not very clear the date could be either 道光 *Dao Guang* 22nd year or *Dao Guang* 28th year, thus respectively referring to 1842 or 1848.

During fieldwork *Zhi-Ren*, the *guzhang*'s second son, came back a couple of times to *Yongxing* village. On one occasion we went to *Xinglong* to visit some relatives of the *Lai* family who have genealogical documents regarding their family ancestors.

We came to know that the first family ancestor who went to *Yongxing* village was 賴能貴 *Lai Neng-Gui*.⁷ He was the 16th generation of the *Lai* family and died in *Yongxing* village in 1892. His tomb is sited not far from the *Tudi Gong* temple. A few meters away there is also the tomb of his son. From the 18th generation onwards, the *Lai* family came into possession of much land in the area.⁸ Fruits, especially bananas, were cultivated and, I was told, many workers were invited to the village. These decided to settle in the village with their families.⁹

There is speculation that *Lai Neng-Gui* may have come with 吳光亮 *Wu Guang-Liang* to *Yongxing* village around the year 1875 to open the roads in central Taiwan.¹⁰ This was stressed by both members of the *Lai* family and several other villagers.

The old *Tudi Gong* temple, which was remembered by several villagers as an extremely sophisticated piece of architecture, was replaced by a larger one in the late 1960s. The old Mr. *Chen*, who seemed to be fairly accurate in terms of dates, said that the temple was built two years before the construction of the theatre stage. If that was the case, the construction date would be 1969.

But, why was the old temple replaced? Although a flood was mentioned once or twice as the cause of the destruction, the most plausible reason seems to be another one.

⁷ The first ancestors of the *Lai* family were from 潁州 *Yingzhou*. From *Henan* they moved to *Fujian*, then to *Taiwan* (*Zhanghua*) and finally to *Yongxing* village.

⁸ The 19th generation of the *Lai* family resides in *Xinglong*, the 20th is *guzhang*, the 21st is *Zhi-Yi* and *Zhi-Ren*, and the 21st, born in 1996, is the offspring of *Zhi-Ren*.

⁹ With the *Lai*, another influential family was that of the *Chen*. The families of workers who then settled in the village were mainly from *Yunlin* and *Zhanghua*.

¹⁰ Just outside the village there is the tomb of a soldier, probably an official, who died in the area opening the roads. His name is 何 何, from *Fujian*. The date inscribed on his tomb is 1877 (光緒3年).

In the early 1970s many temples throughout Taiwan were either refurbished or built anew. Since *Tudi Gong* temples are also considered an expression of the community's wealth and development, in reconstructing their own temple the people of *Yongxing* were conscious that, in order to 'save face,' they had to build a more sophisticated and 'resplendent' temple.

What in the 1970s was an attempt at 'renovating' and 'changing' at all costs has become, especially since the early 1990s, an attempt at 'conserving things' which may give to new generations a glimpse of traditional Taiwanese life. This would allow younger generations the chance to better imagine the past and make 'claims' for co-identity in the present.

A good example of this process of inventing continuities with the past occurred on one of the last days of my fieldwork. That day *Lin cunzhang* told me that since my arrival in the village there had been a lot of discussions on *Tudi Gong* and the local development of the place. He wished to encourage the villagers to clean the old stone of the earlier *Tudi Gong* temple and put it on display. In contemporary Taiwan, *Tudi Gong* temples have the potential, I suggest, of becoming culturally attractive 'sites' worth visiting because of 'claims' of 'authentic' representation of local culture and history. Teacher *Lin* was also thinking of starting to tell the story of the village and its local culture from the *Tudi Gong* temple. This is part of an educational project in *Nantou* county to introduce and encourage students to familiarise themselves with local cultures.

The *Tudi Gong* temple which was built in 1969 did not satisfy the majority of the villagers. For some it was 'ugly' (不好看), for others it was believed to be the cause of 'some unhappy events' (不平安的事情) which occurred in the village. Furthermore, two elderly men suggested that probably the geomancy of the temple in relation to the village was not correct. A new temple, as we have it today, was built. The year inscribed in it is 1978.

Having been to the village a few times before starting my fieldwork, I was already familiar with the *Tudi Gong* temple. I already knew that along with the statue of *Tudi Gong*, there is also displayed the statue of *Tudi Po*, his 'self-centered' wife. On the two sides of the statues there are *Wenban* and *Wuban*, *Tudi Gong*'s subordinates. The question I started to ask myself as well as several villagers regarded the presence of the statue of *Tudi Po*. Why is *Yongxing Tudi Gong* accompanied by his wife, while, as I was told, neighboring villages temples do not depict her?

'It must have been brought by Wu Guang-Liang when he came to the village,' an elderly man speculated. **'It was probably added to the temple because in the village there were rich and important people,'** a teacher added, thus highlighting the widespread view among Taiwanese that *Tudi Po* is mainly worshipped by rich people. *Lin cunzhang* told me the question was discussed in his office by several villagers once when I was not present. They did not manage, however, to find an explanation.

Mr. Xiao, a man married to the only *Hakka* woman in the village, stressed that the temple is the village 'religious centre' (信仰中心). It is here that *Tudi Gong* is informed of families' and village events. It is here that often memories of one's past come to mind. ***'I used to worship here with my family...but now they are all away. What I can do now is to pray Tudi Gong that he may bless and protect my sons and daughters.'***

While talking with Mr. Xiao on the two benches in front of the temple, a grand-mother came with her two small nieces. After worshipping *Tudi Gong* with some fruit, biscuits and soft drinks, grand-ma told the children that they also have to worship the sacred tree.

Tudi Gong temples are often built under the oldest tree in villages. Here in *Yongxing* the sacred tree, which is under county protection, is a *Cinnamon Camphora*, as the explanation says. It is around two-hundred years old. In front of it there is a very small shrine with the inscription 永興村神木 (*Yongxing village's sacred tree*). On the other stone which was part of the old *Tudi Gong* temple there is written in red ink: 樹子母 *Shuzimu*: the tree, thought of as a mother, has two children that stretch from its main tree-trunk.

Grand-ma told the story that in the past there was a hole in the main tree-trunk. Chickens would lay their eggs there. Once a child was playing in the hole and got trapped. ***'We had to worship Tudi Gong to set the child free again,'*** grand-ma said.

At the *Tudi Gong* temple, a fixed reference point and a symbol of stability and permanence for the community, the topic of our chats was often the social mobility of villagers and family members. An interesting paradox which was experienced by those remaining in the village, captured by a sense of nostalgia and sadness for the physical absence of their loved ones. ***'...Yes, our sons and daughters do invite us to go to the city where they live to stay with them. But in big apartments in the city one does not feel the hot and the cold, the rain and the sun. People who live on the 7th floor do not know those living on the 8th. And then there is no space, air, trees...'***

Teacher *Lai* stressed that, ***'young people prefer to move to the big cities. They reckon that cities are places where they can develop their own potential. However, it is not easy for young people to integrate into the city. One has to understand how the city works...you have to get familiar with it, you have to find some work and especially some good friends. Several of my former students have come back...'*** Teacher *Lai* also said that migration towards the city is still continuing. The secondary school in *Shuili* where he is teaching, had between 40-45 classes a few years ago. Now, they have been reduced to 20-25. In big cities, in contrast, the number of classes and of students in each class have almost doubled.

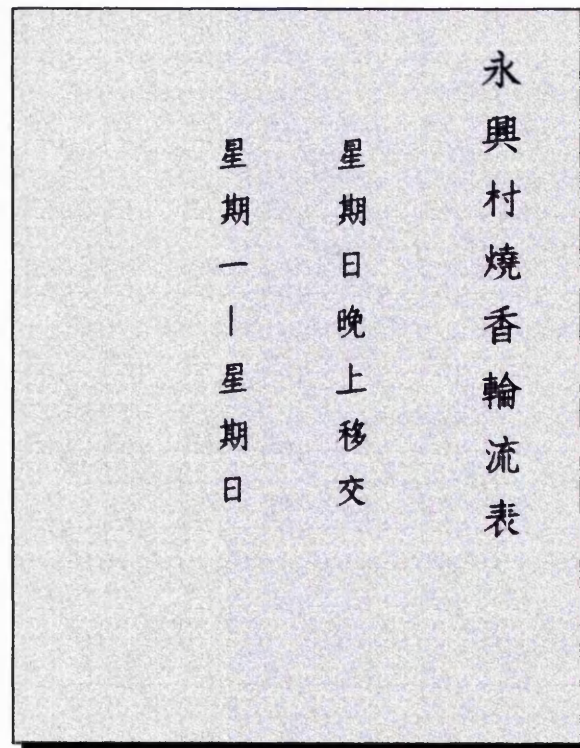
Although there still is a strong movement towards the city, there are proportionately few cases of people who, for a variety of reasons, go back to their village roots, or choose a village in the countryside to settle. This is the case of *Lin Shi-Qi*, a young artist in his middle thirties, who had become a good friend during my fieldwork in *Yongxing*. He lives close to the *Tudi Gong* temple. Two years ago he moved to the village to continue to work on his paintings in a

'free' environment, *'away from pollution and the widespread Taiwanese attitude of making money at all costs.'* He is also widening his knowledge and practice of Buddhism. He does not seem to be an isolated case. He told me that over the last few years several young people have moved into the area from *Taizhong* and *Taibei*.

Mr. *Zhang* 張, a man in his early forties, told me that he had been living in *Taibei* for nineteen years. He is originally from *Yunlin* 雲林. A few years ago he decided to go back to *Yongxing* because his mother could not adjust to living in the city.

According to several villagers, the main reason for the making of the *muban*,¹¹ the wooden plaque for the rotational worship that I introduced in part three of this chapter, was connected to the ongoing process of migration towards the city which has become a common occurrence in this village since the early 1970s. Villagers started to diminish in number, families were scattered all over Taiwan and a sense that something was being lost was felt by those remaining, a sense that, in some cases, was felt even more strongly by those who left for the city. *Yongxing* village will probably never again be as populous and lively as it was before. The temple of *Tudi Gong* and the religious practice of the village appeared to lose its vigour in the eyes of some villagers. The old *Chen* said that, *'to worship only on the 1st and 2nd, the 15th and 16th of each lunar month did not seem to be enough. Besides, we felt the need to create something which could unite the whole village around the Tudi Gong cult.'*

¹¹ The *muban* is not only a special feature of *Yongxing* village. Wolf points out that in some communities of the San-xia area in Taiwan, the jurisdiction of *Tudi Gong* has been recently (in the early 1970s) defined 'by means of a circulating plaque, a piece of wood about twenty inches long and eight inches wide, inscribed on one side with the name of the god and on the other with the name of the community. This token of the god's authority was passed from family to family, day by day, moving through the community along an irregular but exhaustive route. The family holding the plaque on any given day was responsible for making an offering of incense, fruit, and tea at the T'u Ti Kung temple. This it did in the morning after receiving the plaque and again in the evening before passing it on to a neighbor. In this way every family participated in honoring the local T'u Ti Kung and in so doing identified itself as part of the community' (Wolf 1974: 135). *Yongxing's muban*, however, with the name of the community also portrays the names of the village head families. In this regard, see also Wolf (1974: 135, n. 3).



FT3. Frontside view of the 'muban' (wooden plaque) used for the rotational worship of Tudi Gong and Lin Peng

The *muban* is a wooden plaque 15cm wide, 23cm long and 1.5cm thick. On the front side, the name of the village is accompanied by the characters referring to the schedule for the rotational worship, on Sunday evenings the plaque has to be passed on to the next family and so each rotation lasts from Monday to Sunday.

On the reverse side the 49 names of the head families are written.¹² The main surnames of families who actually reside in the village are the *Chen* 陳 (13), the *Lin* 林 (5), the *Xu* 許 (5), the *Xiao* 蕭 (4) and the *Lai* 賴 (3). The *muban* rotates through the families living in the first *lin* to the fourth one and the worship has to be done twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, both at the *Tudi Gong* temple and at the *Lin Peng* shrine. When a family is temporarily absent the plaque will be passed on to the next family on the list and should new families settle in the village, they would be asked if they want to join in the worship.

¹² The reverse side of the *muban* as well as a presentation of the information written on it have already been presented in part three of this chapter.

The creation of the *muban* seems to indicate an attempt at reinforcing a sense of place, community and identity in the village at a time when these were particularly felt as threatened by the social mobility of villagers. The absence, temporary or permanent, of family members and villagers appears to have generated a sense of ontological insecurity among those remaining - as well as among those who left for the city. This has been felt as a threat to that imagined sense of stability which had been somehow maintained by previous 'continuous face-to-face relationships.' By being passed around, the *muban* almost keeps a record of those present in the village and, in people's memories, of those who, for a variety of reasons, have left the community.

The *muban* also seems to have strengthened the ties of human relationships, solidarity and *renqingwei* 人情味 in the village, a topic which was often touched on by villagers and by those returning for a short while to the village and which can be regarded as one of the functions of the *Tudi Gong* cult. The sense of community and the sense of human relationships felt by villagers would often be compared with the anonymous experience of the city and its lacking in the 'human touch.' **'People today seem to have lost the meaning of gongde 功德,'** *guzhang* told me on several occasions.¹³ This, which was mainly attributed to the influences of modern life, has not left unaffected the practice of everyday life in small communities such as that of *Yongxing* village.

Despite changes, however, life in the village would still be described as being more 'simple' or 'plain' (單純). The word *danchun* 單純 would be used especially to refer to human relationships. There was a man who would come to the village every day from nearby *Shuili*, a town of almost twenty-five thousand people, and spend several hours mainly at the *Lao Chen's* shop. **'Here, he told me, human relationships are more danchun...I like this. In Shuili, though only a small town, they are more complicated (複雜) ... you can imagine how it is in big cities and in Taipei.'**

¹³ *Gongde* can be translated as the acting for the common good without expecting anything in return (see chapter five).

2.5 On my way back to the city...

Time was going by very quickly and the day for my return to the city was approaching. I did not know how I would manage to put in writing all the information that villagers had entrusted to me. I felt that I should not *'write about them,'* but rather *'write an account with them'* which would, as much as possible, let their 'voices' become merged with my own, attempting to let the reader also feel that sense of friendship, trust and human touch of the people of Yongxing. On the bus from Shuili to Taipei, I recalled to my mind...

*Today I went to see Lin Shi-Qi. We had a long chat together..... He then invited me to go to Shuili to visit some of his friends... They invited us for supper.... I came back to the village at around nine o'clock and all the villagers I met on the street were asking where I had been in the afternoon. How strange, I thought. I know that the Taiwanese like to ask **'where have you been?'** just to start the conversation or to be friendly.... I have never had so many people asking me **'where have you been?'** as today. I became a bit suspicious. When I arrived home I saw guzhang very tense and A-Ma smiling with several of her friends. **'A-Diong where have you been?, guzhang asked. We have been looking for you all afternoon. I sent people to the tombs, the temples we thought that going to see the tombs you might not feel well as it was very hot today, or that a snake had bitten you... I also asked Lin cunzhang to use the loud speaker in the village to try to find you...'***

This episode happened on one of my last days in the village. In the previous two months I had only been out of the village twice and had informed them of my temporary absence. Villagers had become so accustomed to my constant presence in the village that any change in schedule or simply not seeing me around would soon be noticed. Besides, in their minds, a friend who comes from afar requires special care and attention.

*The morning I left the village, guzhang did not say a word. He just looked at me and went inside the house... Lin Shi-Qi accompanied me to Shuili where I would take a bus to Taipei. Inside the bus station there was a small Tudi Gong temple just facing the area where I would take the bus... I sat there for a while and after a few minutes guzhang appeared, **'A-Diong now you know how to come back on your own,'** he repeated a few times.*

It is to this human touch and welcoming of guzhang, A-Ma, their family and all the friends of Yongxing village that I owe so much and for which I am deeply grateful.

P53

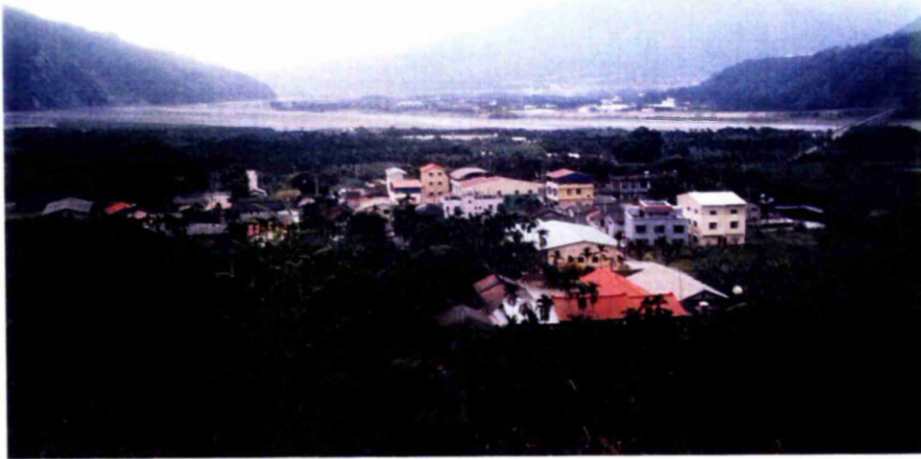
P53. Yongxing village: a view from above

P54

P54. From Shuili to Yongxing: the bridge

P55

P55. One of the two main streets in Yongxing village



P56

P56. Guzhang's house

P57 P58

*P57. A-Ma**P58. Lai guzhang*

P59. Tudi Gong temple in Yongxing village

P60. Tudi Gong and Tudi Po in Yongxing village

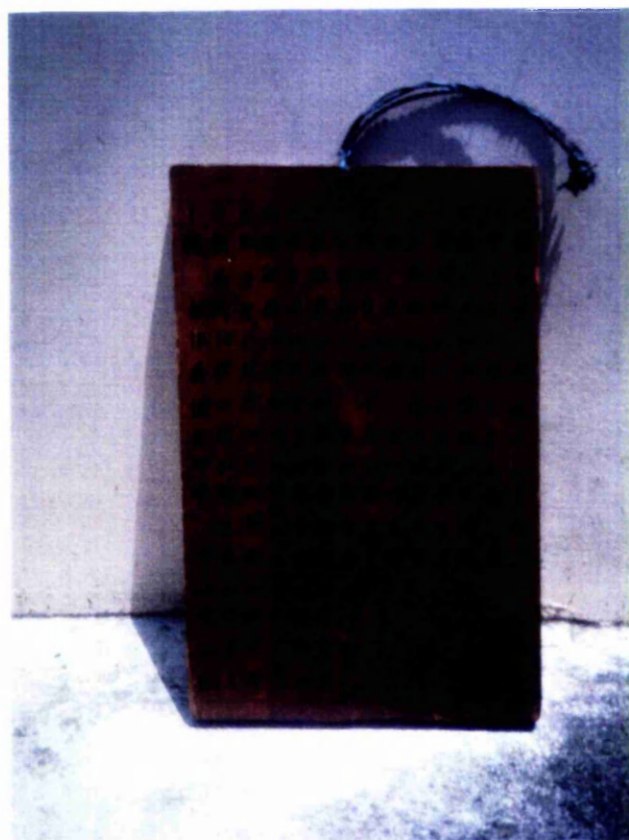
P61. The old stone of the earlier Tudi Gong temple in Yongxing village



P62

P63

The 'muban' (wooden plaque) used for the rotational worship of
Tudi Gong and Lin Peng



P64

P64. The shrine of Yongxing village's sacred tree

P65

P65. Activity centre

P66

P66. Elementary school

P67

Lin Peng shrine

P68

P69



P70

P71

The temple of the Twelve Ancient Heroes

P72
P73

The Yonglong Gong: the Tudi Gong of Yongxing and Xinglong



Chapter Three

***Writing places and the place of writing:
reflecting back on writing, fieldwork and theory.***

A note to the reader.

3.1 From the vantage point of hindsight: reflecting on the first two chapters.

3.2 'Siting' and 'sighting' texts:

on writing about Tudi Gong in Datong district and Yongxing village.

Questions in motions...

3.3 Concluding thoughts.

A note to the reader

I imagine that you, the reader, at this stage, having already become somewhat familiar with my two main fieldwork sites and the topic of my research, will also have an initial grasp of my methodological approach and my theoretical preoccupations. If you have been caught up in the story, you may also have, consciously or unconsciously, let my writing begin to draw a picture in your mind of the people, places and Tudi Gongs we have met during our journeying from one place to the other.

In addition, in your act of reading you have gradually started to have a sense of the two places, their atmosphere, their specific characteristics. You have probably been attracted by or even felt a sense of attachment to some Tudi Gong temples and their localities. You may have noticed differences and similarities between the two places and their Tudi Gongs.

Although metaphorically we, you and I, have walked together through the district and the village in an attempt to let you become acquainted with them in the same way as I did, in practice we have built our knowledge of the two places from different and distant spatial and temporal positions. These are gradually intermingling in this ethnographic account to the extent that, most probably, you are starting to raise a few questions regarding theoretical and physical trajectories that I have followed and suggesting some that I have not indicated or probably not been able to detect.

If you are an anthropologist you may also be recalling your own fieldwork experience and writing process, so that you are almost talking to the text you have in front of you. In other words, you are becoming part of the story and the act of reading you have been engaged in so far is, I feel, in the process of writing once again the pages of this ethnographic account.

*Besides, your reading and therefore **rewriting** are very much influenced by your own personality, your background, your age, your gender, your current spatial position, as these defined mine during my ethnographic process. I think that the characteristics of the places in which we conduct our fieldwork and the senses of place that both anthropologists and people 'on the ground' feel and experience, cannot be split from 'our' reading the world and writing about it.*

*It was, in fact, **during the process of writing** these first two chapters that several questions started to occupy my mind. Their recurrent insistence has convinced me, although hesitantly, that it would be worthwhile to present and discuss them in this third chapter.*

3.1 *From the vantage point of hindsight: reflecting on the first two chapters*

It is entirely obvious to any contemporary scholar that there can be no neutral language of description; and that is especially clear when the social and cultural domains are in question... Our textual practices themselves constitute the social realities constructed and reconstructed in ethnographic writing. Theory and method are inextricably linked: they are equally closely tied to modes of writing... The fully mature ethnography requires a reflexive awareness of its own writing, the possibilities and limits of its own language, and a principled exploration of its mode of representations.

Atkinson (1994: 175-181).

As an unintended consequence of broken ties between process and product, theories of the text can develop in isolation from the research processes whose results they supposedly represent.

Agar (1995: 113).

This third chapter has originated from a gradual and ongoing reflection on my theoretical approach to *place and senses of place*, my *fieldwork* and my *writing process*. The onset of such a reflection was due to the fact that during the writing up of the first two chapters of this thesis and in my field-notes, I noticed that the production of the two accounts differed to a considerable degree. These initial products, in other words, although belonging to the same research topic, seemed to show a substantial variation in the form of writing, and, consequently, in the way knowledge, understanding and senses of the places in question were starting to be presented in an ethnographic account.

What strikes me even more is the fact that at the beginning of my writing process - both in Taiwan and London - I did not employ any strategic device to highlight the difference. Before starting fieldwork, I also did not take on a preset and deliberate tactical position because of the characteristics of the two places I was researching upon. Its emergence was more related to the unstructured and spontaneous manner in which I carried out my fieldwork and writing. Viewed from the vantage point of hindsight, I feel that such a differentiation was very much influenced by several interconnected factors which, following on from an initial attempt to contextualise my own writings, have set in motion a process of reflexivity on several issues with which anthropologists are increasingly confronted.

Positing some questions

Places, cultures and ethnographic writings

A first factor which contributed to a differential ethnographic writing and presentation of the first two chapters was due, I feel, to the social and spatial characteristics of the two places I researched upon. *Datong* district, in the congested metropolis of *Taipei*, and the small and scenic village of *Yongxing*, in central Taiwan, with forty-nine families currently residing in it, produced different *senses of place* in the people I was interacting with as in myself.

An initial speculation which can be put forward regards the fact that anthropologists are certainly aware of and have discussed issues regarding the extent to which their ethnographic writings may *represent and shape places and cultures*. The ongoing debate on 'writing culture,' in fact, has largely examined such issues and pointed out the risks and limitations of ethnographic representations.¹ On the contrary, I think that the question of whether *places and cultures* we study - and especially the *senses of place* which both anthropologist and 'people on the ground' feel and experience - may shape and dictate our ethnographic writings does not seem to have been coherently addressed in anthropological literature.

Allowing the voices of people and places in ethnographic writing

Secondly, the way I came to know of, and the connections I managed to establish in, *Datong* district, *Yongxing* village and in Taiwan generally have guided, considerably, my ethnographic 'progress.' The fact of having spent several years in Taiwan since 1989, has allowed me to 'build up' a sufficient knowledge of local contours of social organisations, economic and political structures, ritual practices and migration

¹ See for example Marcus and Cushman (1982), Benson (1993), Bruner (1993), Clifford and Marcus (1986), Turner and Bruner (1986), Clifford (1983; 1988), Geertz (1988), Fardon (1990), Hobart (1985; 1996), Fabian (1990; 1995), Van Maanen (1988; 1995), Archetti (1994) and Atkinson (1994) among others. With special reference to 'place' and to the extent to which anthropological theory has represented and shaped places and cultures, Appadurai notes that '*...a few simple theoretical handles become metonyms and surrogates for the civilization or society as a whole: hierarchy in India, honor-and-shame in the circum-Mediterranean, filial piety in China are all examples of what one might call gatekeeping concepts in anthropological theory, concepts, that is, that seem to limit anthropological theorizing about the place in question, and that define the quintessential and dominant questions of interest in the region... the central questions anthropologists have to ask themselves regarding anthropological theory over time, and at any point in time, concern whether these gatekeeping concepts, these theoretical metonyms, really reflect something significant about the place in question, or whether they reveal a relatively arbitrary imposition of the whims of anthropological fashion on particular places*' (Appadurai 1986: 357-58).

processes, among others. More importantly, it has given me a sufficient time to manufacture networks of trust-based relationships which proved to be essential during my fieldwork.

The choice of the two fieldwork sites, for example, was dictated by these friendships and connections. Besides, as I have stressed in chapter two of this thesis, *'conducting fieldwork in Yongxing village would surely be an important step towards the completion of my PhD thesis. More importantly, however, it would be an attempt at understanding the lives of some people living in Taiwan who had become friends, and of a place that had become like my own home. This attitude, I hoped, would go well beyond the spatial and temporal contingency of an anthropological fieldwork.'*

The issue which can be raised here questions the degree to which anthropologists allow *the voices of people and places* among and in which they conduct their fieldwork to become authoritative in their ethnographic process and final product.

***Places,
methodologies
and
ethnographic
writings***

A third factor is that during fieldwork my own position as an anthropologist differed according to the locations where I found myself, thus requiring different styles and methodologies for collecting data. The city and the countryside were not the only two locales which demanded a differential approach on my part. I would stress that even the various temples in *Datong* district, for example, their specific characteristics, location, organisation and information - both oral and written - available on them, coupled with the connections I managed to establish in each locale, required a distinct series of research strategies. I would like briefly to expand on this assumption.

I remember that while reflecting back on my writing, fieldwork and theory, a Taiwanese anthropologist friend of mine, who read some drafts sections of the first two chapters, told me that if I had chosen one or two temples in the city, I may have had the same situation I experienced in the village and, therefore, the mode of ethnographic writing would have resembled that of the chapter on the countryside.

Such a question, which seems to presume that the two chapters do portray a differential mode of ethnographic presentation and writing, raises an interesting issue which concerns the extent to which the territorial choice of specific fieldwork sites inform - or should inform - the practice of fieldwork and, consequently, anthropologists' textual practices.

**Theory,
fieldwork
and
ethnographic
writing**

Moreover, during this process of reflexivity, I have learned to view *theory, fieldwork and ethnographic writing* not as three spatially and temporally separated entities, but rather as co-present dialectical facets constituting the anthropological undertaking. This raises the issue of the extent to which anthropologists can reduce the distance between *culture* as it is known during fieldwork and *culture* as it is portrayed in a written account, between ethnography as a process and as a product, as method and as genre (Agar 1995).

In addition, the spatial and temporal distance between an ethnographic text and the place where its production originated (i.e. the fieldwork site) has been intensely reduced in the practice of contemporary ethnography. As a personal example, I would like to stress that when in London, access to internet and emails have allowed me to be constantly in touch with several of my Taiwanese friends with whom I exchange information about Taiwan as well as the topic of my research. My ethnographic writing is still being largely dictated by this ongoing communication.

Anthropologists and their ethnographic writing practices, it has to be stressed, are constantly challenged by *'the technologization of anthropological knowledge'* (Moore 1996: 7). In fact, *'one of the things that technology has really revolutionized is the scale or scales at which social relations operate. Face-to-face interaction, as many scholars have pointed out, is no longer the only basis for society, and this point alone revolutionizes anthropology's object of study'* (Moore 1996: 7). Moore's observation is, I feel, quite true in the highly technologized context of Taiwanese society. In *Taipei* city, for example, the lack of space, the long time one needs to go from one side of the city to the other, a frenetic urban environment and a bustling life-style, often force people to make good use of the telephone as a means of social interaction and friendship. Although, in theory, I incline to agree with Hastrup who stresses that *'there is no way to substitute a phone call for fieldwork; most of the relevant information is non-verbal and cannot be 'called up', but has to be experienced as performed'* (Hastrup and Hervik 1994: 3), I must admit that during my fieldwork I learned a good amount of relevant information by telephone, during which I was often entrusted with a 'reflection' of the performance of the lived experience of several of my friends.

**Reading and
writing the
world and
the word**

During my writing process, I was able to present part of my research to various audiences, both in London and in *Taipei*. During a conference in *Taipei*, the point was raised that the differential construction of the first two chapters appears to be more the result of my personality and my subjective feelings about the two places than that of the degree to which the *authority* of the two places has 'dictated' my ethnographic writing. My question here, which I offered as an answer during the conference, is that of whether it can be possible to dissociate the anthropologist's personal consciousness in *reading the world* and his/her stylistic traits in *writing about it*, from the places in which we conduct our fieldwork.

In Freire's words (Freire & Macedo 1987: 29-36), the '*dynamic movement*' between '*reading the word and the world*'² cannot be dissociated from the dialectical process of '*writing it or rewriting it.*' In fact, '*reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world. As I suggested earlier, this movement from the word to the world is always present; even the spoken word flows from our reading of the world. In a way, however, we can go further and say that reading the word is not preceded merely by reading the world, but by a certain form of **writing** it or **rewriting** it, that is of transforming it by means of conscious, practical work.*' (Freire & Macedo 1987: 35).

In the literacy process, in other words, *the act of writing the world* entails a sophisticated relationship with *the act of reading the world*. The two acts are '*basically inseparable*' (Freire & Macedo 1987: 33). Those who still advocate the possibility of a neutral, objective or scientific textual construction of ethnographic texts, are probably not aware of the fact, as Atkinson suggests in the starting quote, that '*our textual practices themselves constitute - and, I would stress, **are constituted by** - the social realities constructed and reconstructed in ethnographic writing (and) that there can be no neutral language of description.*'

In my view, the finished ethnographic text itself cannot be dissociated from what has been the process of creation, in its various stages, towards the construction of it as well as from its main actors: **the author**, in our case both researcher and writer, **the context**, namely the people on the ground among whom we conduct our fieldwork as well as the specific places they inhabit, and **the audiences**, by which I refer not

² Paulo Freire recalling to mind his elementary school learning process pays '*heartfelt tribute*' to Eunice, his teacher, who '*continued and deepened my parents' work. With her, reading the word, the phrase, the sentence never entailed a break with reading the **world**. With her, reading the world meant reading the **word-world***' (Freire & Macedo 1987: 32).

only to the academic localities anthropologists come from or are affiliated with during fieldwork, but also those represented by the people themselves we write about, who, increasingly, have the possibility of 'critically' reading the ethnographic product, or even, drafts of it as a work in progress.

**Observing
the city and
the country**

'Country and city are very powerful words, and this is not surprising when we remember how much they seem to stand for in the experience of human communities' (Williams 1993: 1).

Words, images and senses associated with the city and the country seem to show their powerfulness in their contrasting elements. That is probably why they continue to be so suggestive in our own representations of them. In reality, however, the city and the country are not so dichotomous. Their variation seems to have place-based connotations.

Since the 1960s, Taiwan's economy, for example, has witnessed a continuous proliferation of rural industrialisation and service enterprises (Gallin & Gallin 1982: 239). This has set in motion a re-flourishing of socio-cultural life in rural areas as well as frequent flows of people and commodities between the city and the countryside. Families in rural areas often have some of their members living in the city. The continuous interaction happens both by telephone and through frequent visits that are made easy by the relatively short distances and by an efficient transport system. Over the last few years, Taiwan's government has often stressed, probably because of their imagined absence or diminution, the 'building of local communities' especially in the countryside. Rural 'local communities' as cultural entities have, lately - after the March 1996 presidential elections - started to be given more stress as 'political' entities. This, I suppose, might result in a more active participation of rural areas in the political life of the cities.

The above are just some of the reasons that make the often referred to dichotomy between rural and urban areas rather fragile in the place of Taiwan. What still seems, however, to indicate the dichotomy, is shown, I feel, by the contrasting *senses of place* that people in Taiwan feel towards the city and the countryside. These senses, together with mine, have, I argue, engendered a differential presentation of the first two chapters.

Yet, one has to be constantly wary of the risk of unproblematically rehearsing a prejudice on the countryside as harbinger of all that is

nostalgically to be lauded, whilst the city betokens (moral and) social breakdown, thereby replicating certain officialized imagery. As I have already pointed out, reality is not so dichotomously simple.

If this is the case, "what on earth is this 'sense of place'?"

Anthropologists seem not to be very familiar with the notion of *sense of place* as examined especially in social geography. The question "*what on earth is this 'sense of place'?*", which was often addressed to me during various conferences I gave during my writing process, reveals a certain unfamiliarity and probably suspicion regarding such a notion, which, I feel, may question, more strongly, the 'objective,' 'rational,' 'scientific' claim of ethnographic accounts.

This claim seem to stress, often unconsciously in anthropological undertaking, a functional or structured view of societies, cultures and places in which there is little space for the fragmented, confused and changeable character of modern life. As Hastrup writes, '*the desires for fixed standards in science is challenged by the frightening indeterminacy of experience*' (Hastrup & Hervick 1994: 236).

Howell, revisiting and examining ethnographic accounts, points out that, generally speaking, '*the old-style ethnographies of our forefathers and foremothers are much derided. They are derided because, so the argument goes, they create a make-believe world of the society (or section of a society) where the anthropologist is the invisible, but unquestioned, authority, and every aspect of the society is presented in an (unrealistically) systematic and tidy way. No loose ends are allowed to remain, no uncertainties with respect to the analysis chosen are allowed to be aired*' (Howell 1994: 318).

There is the risk, in other words, of representing, through ethnographic writing, an ordered world which, in the practice of the everyday life of the people among whom anthropologists conduct their fieldwork, seems not to exist - as simplified representations in lieu of the uncertainties and inconsistencies that are the practices of everyday life.

Place is indeed an 'odd' and 'misunderstood' concept, if confined merely to its topographical characteristics. These are but a facet of the sophisticated notion of place, with which, only recently, anthropology is attempting to come to terms.³

As argued in the introduction, the notion of *place*, more effectively examined and discussed by social geographers, has proven to be an ongoing, shifting, resultant of a complex intermingling of various theoretically distinct concepts, such as *locale*, *location*, *sense of place*, *territory*, *locality*, *community* and *identity*.⁴ In the practice of everyday life, these concepts, which can only be separated for analytical purposes, are experienced together in the temporality of human and social life.

Places, furthermore, never speak for themselves: they need to be familiarised with, experienced, practised, understood, interpreted, conceptualised in order to let them become authoritative in our ethnographic accounts. The intrinsic character of places and the attachments that individuals and communities develop towards them,⁵ set in motion a process of a reverberative creation of a *sense of place* both for the anthropologist and for people 'on the ground.' In fact, if the anthropologist has his/her own senses towards the places/people, people indeed have their own towards the places they inhabit and towards the anthropologist.

³ 'Place' has only recently 'entered' the anthropological arena. Inspired by Sherry Ortner's article (1984) on the development of anthropological theory since the sixties, Appadurai's comments (1986) highlight a theme which is not directly discussed in Ortner's survey. The theme concerns the significance that the study of place can have in the development of anthropological theory. Appadurai points out that 'the only context, so far as I am aware, in which there has been any direct discussion of the problem of place is the post-World War II policy debates and initiatives surrounding area studies programs in the United States. But these discussions have largely been confined to fiscal, strategic, and programmatic matters rather than to fundamental intellectual ones. Further, at least for anthropologists, the problem of place is far more general than the rubric area studies suggests' (Appadurai 1986: 356, n. 2).

The 85th annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Philadelphia, in December 1986 (*Cultural Anthropology* 1988), explored and discussed the relationship between *place* and *voice* in anthropological theory.

The issue of *Cultural Anthropology* (1992) focused on the theme of *Space, identity, and politics of difference*. More in detail, its ethnographic articles represent 'a modest attempt to deal with the issue of space and place, along with some necessarily related concerns such as those of location, displacement, community and identity' (Gupta & Ferguson 1992: 6).

Other authors who have further enlarged the discussion on the topic are: Hannerz, U. 1987. The world in creolization. *Africa* 57. 4, 546-59; Rosaldo, R. 1988. Ideology, place and people without culture. *Cultural Anthropology* 3. 1, 77-87; Rosaldo, R. 1989. *Culture and truth: the remaking of social analysis*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press; and Parkin (1991).

⁴ See the *Introduction* of the thesis, the part entitled *Place and senses of place*, Theoretical trajectory 3, *Sense of place*.

⁵ See Johnston et al. (1994: 548)

By concentrating on the notion of *senses of place* I am not excluding the other concepts from my theoretical and ethnographic landscape. *Senses of place*, I feel, seem to capture, more fully, the multiplicity of meanings which people ascribe to place through experience, memory and intention. As Rodman⁶ (1992: 641) cleverly stresses, '*places have multiple meanings that are constructed spatially. The physical, emotional, and experiential realities places hold for their inhabitants at particular times need to be understood apart from their creation as the locales of ethnography. While anthropologists indeed create places in ethnography, they hold no patent on place-making.*'

With reference to fieldwork and ethnographic writing, the main question, in my view, is the extent to which *people's and anthropologists' senses of place* are allowed to come forward and merge in the ethnographic process and final product.

The questions which have been highlighted above have attempted to delineate various paths of ethnographic reflection and theoretical investigation which I consider significantly connected with the main question I have presented to the reader: the extent to which the *authority* of the two places in which I conducted my fieldwork has shown and dictated a substantial variation in the presentation of the two chapters and in the respective modes of my ethnographic writing.

I have argued that my knowledge, comprehension, senses and stylistic traits in writing about the two sites have indeed contributed to a differential mode of ethnographic writing (note my emphasis on *author* in the word *authority*), but cannot be considered as the only reason for such a differentiation. My approach to the study of *place and senses of place*, my fieldwork sites and practices and my attempt to contextualise my own writings are, I feel, furnishing valuable insights towards clarifying the main question I have presented to the reader.

In addition, Freire's assumption that

*reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world. Language and reality are dynamically interconnected. The understanding attained by critical reading of a text implies perceiving the relationship between text and context,*⁷

⁶ At the time of writing my theoretical approach to *Place and senses of place* (Dell'Orto 1994), I was not aware of Rodman's article (1992), which is based on several studies by social geographers and pertinently discusses several issues which I have found directly comparable to the manner I discuss the notion of place.

⁷ In Freire & Macedo (1987: 29).

leads me, from a hindsight reflection and analysis, to stress the fact that I have not considered my '*reading the world*' to be a solitary and individual enterprise but the result of a continuous dialogical '*rapport*' with people 'on the ground' before, during and after fieldwork.⁸

Ethnography, in fact, as Fabian stressed, '*is produced in a highly contextual, intersubjective situation*' (1979).⁹ Consequently, I do not regard my '*writing about it*' as a spatially estranged and temporally disconnected process from the people and places among whom and in which I conducted my fieldwork, but as an interactive and reciprocal effort in which my presence in the text and in the field takes the shape of an ongoing mediation between cultures, people and places.¹⁰ The main bodies of the two first chapters, in fact, were written *in situ*, in a constant communication with people and places, with whom and which, I venture to say, I wish to share the 'authorship' of the two accounts.¹¹

In the following part of this chapter I will elaborate on the above questions, by 'siting' and 'sighting' my own ethnographic writing(s) regarding *Datong* district and *Yongxing* village. At the same time, I will let readers further familiarise themselves with my fieldwork sites and my research strategies. In the final part ('*Questions in motion...*' and '*Concluding thoughts*'), I will draw on some of the topics presented in the first two parts and introduce the second section of the thesis.

⁸ I would like to stress that I am not idealising the 'dialogical rapport' I experienced with people on the 'ground' and scholars during fieldwork. In almost two years of fieldwork, and three years of language studies and research planning before that, I only recall a brief misunderstanding with one of my main raconteurs, which, 'we reckoned,' was useful to clarify our intentions and plans. The relationship between 'ethnographer-informant' in Taiwan seems to be shaped more by rapport and friendship, than by 'mutual exploitation' (on this relationship see Crick 1982: 26).

⁹ Quoted in Crick (1982: 26). The article to which Crick refers is: Fabian, J. 1979. Rule and process: thoughts on ethnography as communication. *Philosophy of Social Science* 9, 1-26.

¹⁰ The anthropologist as mediator or the 'between-ness' of the anthropologist, are 'spatial' images that, on a personal level, I have found particularly inspiring. Being Italian, I have found myself in between places, people and academic localities other than those of my place of origin, thus giving a tri-dimensional imprint to the effort of 'translating and writing cultures.'

¹¹ Although in recent years there has been an increasing practice among local and foreign anthropologists to publish together the result of joint research, a practice which seems to stem from a sharpened awareness of 'local knowledge' and of the changing relationship between the subject-object of anthropological studies, there seems to be a widespread absence in ethnographic accounts of an acknowledgement of the authorship of ordinary people and friends - those people on the streets, for example, that in various ways and degrees have inspired and directed our ethnographic research and often, as in my case, 'pruned back' our inadequate ethnographic speculations and understandings. Crick stresses that '*our habits in this respect raise serious questions about authorship for our informants put in such a lot of information yet we call the ethnographic scripts that result our own*' (Crick 1982: 25-6).

3.2 'Siting' and 'sighting' texts: on writing about Tudi Gong in Datong district and Yongxing village

From places to spatial practices to ethnographic writings

'Siting' and 'sighting' texts is an attempt to contextualise my own writings about *Tudi Gong* in *Datong* district and *Yongxing* village. By employing spatial metaphors of 'siting' and 'sighting,' I wish to *reposition* and *revisit* the first two chapters and to confront the tendency in ethnography to separate product from process, form from content, writing from research, method from genre (Agar 1995:124).

By emphasising the terms 'siting' and 'sighting' texts, in fact, I would also like to point out a methodological approach: as I have walked through *Datong* district and *Yongxing* village in an attempt to let the reader become familiar with the two places in the same way as I did, so I will journey through my own texts indicating and discussing discrepancies and similarities between my main two fieldwork sites and the spatial practices and ethnographic writings they have generated.

Agar points out that,

ethnography is an ambiguous term; it refers both to a research process and to a textual product. The process/product link is not unique to ethnography, but seldom does lexical ambiguity so neatly index a fundamental disciplinary problem (Agar 1995: 112).

He, then, suggests that one way 'to restore the process/product ambiguity to ethnography, from start to finish' (Agar 1995: 125) is to come to realise that in the ethnographic process 'data collection, analysis, and writing are dialogical and ongoing rather than being separate steps in a linear process' (Agar 1995: 125).

I entirely share Agar's preoccupation to the extent that my own preoccupation - or ambition - is that of venturing into an assessment of my own writings which may contribute to overcome the 'ambiguity' and the 'split' which has been emphasised above. Although, there still is a consistent trend in anthropological academic institutions to separate 'the three steps' both spatially and temporally,¹² with a clear emphasis on the theoretical and methodological training previous to fieldwork, there is an increasing awareness among anthropologists, as I have indicated in the previous part, of the implications and questions that the dichotomy between the

¹² A practice which, I feel, seems to be dictated more by bureaucratic and financial constraints and hassles, imposed by both universities and funding bodies, than by the discipline's questioning and reformulating of its own methodological approach and curriculum.

ethnographic process and final product may cause and raise.¹³ My stress on *place* and on the spatial practices it continuously engender both for anthropologists and for people, appears to be, I feel, a feasible attempt to indicate ways in which anthropology may reduce the distance between the two poles of a dichotomy which, if not taken seriously, may distort and endanger, in ethnographic writing, the very core of the anthropological enterprise which is the representation of 'other people, places and cultures.'

In this analysis, I proceed from the basic assumption that there is a dialectical and ongoing relationship between people and places and that spatial practices shape and are shaped by the social and spatial characteristics of the specific places in which they happen. This continuous dialectical interplay portrays *place* as an active generator of meaning and practice - an aspect of place which is often taken for granted or underestimated in social analysis - and not, merely, as passive receptacle of human and societal activities.

The *agency of place*, a concept which may be contested but that I nonetheless risk to put forward, allows me to stress the active role of place in the practice of everyday life. However, it is only when it is 'practised' that place starts to tell, inform of, show, its power and authority to the extent that it captures people's senses and imagination, memories and intentions. Through experience, place can constrain and liberate, kill and revive. Various ethnographic examples that I have presented in the first two chapters, for example, seem to indicate a marked sense of ontological insecurity and alienation that, usually, people from the countryside feel and experience when living in the built environment of Taiwan's cities.¹⁴ This sense of insecurity extends from the physical configurations of the cities to the practice of human relationships and rapport. Despite the lure of and the potential one can develop in the cities and the 'monotony' of rural life, life in the countryside is still very much sought after, idealised, both in real and, especially, imaginary terms.¹⁵

¹³ Here, I also refer to the various chats that I have had with PhD candidates over the last few years. Theory, fieldwork and writing up seem to be regarded as three stages and often independent steps in the anthropological undertaking thus making the dichotomy between process and product a 'hot' issue in the discipline's own understanding of itself. *'The vast gap between the personal field experience and the impersonal conventions of the standard ethnographic monograph'* (Bruner 1993: 5) can undervalue, in my view, the same process which the final product should supposedly represent. Aware of the fact that *'processes are difficult to render in words'* (Hastrup & Hervik 1994: 1), I am attempting to resist the 'split' by privileging, in my ethnographic writing, the *'process at the expense of the structure, and knowledge as a creative field rather than a solid construction'* (Hastrup & Hervik 1994: 224).

¹⁴ In the chapter on Yongxing village, several of my raconteurs shared their senses and experiences of life in the city, the extent to which both the physical environment (thus the metaphor of apartments as 'cages'), the different senses of human touch and relationship they experienced in the city and in the countryside, indicate the influences that specific places can exercise on people's lives, senses and imagination.

¹⁵ The case of *Lin Shi-Qi*, which has been presented in chapter two part four, is indicative of the increasing number of people who leave the cities and settle in either their villages of origin or in other villages in the countryside.

Ethnographic writing, which, I argue, is intimately linked with the narratives of people's spatial practices through time and space, cannot ignore, in the name of objectivity and rationality, the tremendous power that place exercises on both the anthropologist and people among whom he/she conducts fieldwork. Often the *power of place*, or what has been referred to as the *personality of place*, can act more efficaciously on, and can be more obvious to an outsider than to the people who inhabit it (Shields 1992: 16).¹⁶ Although I do not share the assumption that the 'character' or the 'personality' of a specific place is 'unquestioned' and 'taken for granted' by people who inhabit it,¹⁷ outsiders - including the anthropologist - may feel a stronger sense of place by way of comparison with their own places of origin or by associating, for example, a characteristic smell, an image, an activity with it. The *authorization of place*, by which I mean the capacity of inscribing and labelling a specific place, is often instantiated by outsiders, by the media and by governmental bodies.

The following passage, which I wrote after a long discussion I had with a group of people in Datong district, raises several issues which seem to be particularly related with an outside-inside *authorization of place* and the contested interplay of structures (e.g. external constraints) and people as agents and interpreters. It also offers an indication of an ongoing confrontation between the relative valencies of *cultural* continuity versus historical and topographical specificities and conjectures.

There seem to be conflicting views about Datong district which, with Wanhua district, is one of the oldest areas of Taipei city. The frenetic development of the city, and, at the same time, the attempt to keep intact some of the old places, generate a dialectical relationship between tradition and modernity, and raises the issue of how to adapt to a new era in the history of Taiwan without losing a link with the past.

The present Datong district has been recently depicted by the media as the 'district which has no tomorrow,' and the possibility of joining its northern, central and southern parts to the neighbouring districts has been discussed. A renovation of its physical facade by making it 'in tune' with the more 'developed' Zhongshan district or other districts in the city has also been proposed. Is this a hidden attempt by the local government to purge simultaneously its human

¹⁶ Shields (1992: 16) quotes Ley (1977: 508) who writes that 'any habitually interacting group of people convey a character to the place they occupy which is immediately apparent to an outsider, though unquestioned and taken-for-granted by habituees.' See Ley, D. 1977. Social geography and the taken-for-granted world. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (New series) 2.4, 498-512.

¹⁷ See previous footnote. In Taiwan, for example, a widespread, although recent, preoccupation with 'quality of life,' is generating a consistent questioning of issues related to restructuring places, building local communities and tackling environmental issues, among others.

facade, evident walking through the district, of prostitution, underworld businesses and criminal activities?

The media have pointed out that Datong district is one of the most dangerous areas in the city and several people have told me that **'I will go to Datong district only if I really need to go. I would not go there for a walk or to relax.'** At the same time there is an attempt to refurbish the old streets of the district as one of the few links with the past of the city. As one would expect, local people are the main supporters of a balanced renovation of the area, emphasising not destroying the district's characteristics and flavour (味道). The cultural component or, in more simple terms, the link with the past of the city seems to be the main reason people in the area I have talked to, advance in order to 'save' their place. On more personal and nostalgic terms, some people have said, **'you know, I have always lived here. My place is my history.'** However, the high rate of social mobility makes other people coming from 'outside' quite indifferent towards the history and memory of the past of the district but not towards an improvement of 'quality of life and structures.'

Ethnographic writing is not a neutral activity. It contributes, through its own writing, to the *authorization* and *labelling* of specific places. In my own ethnographic writing, for example, I have tried to resist the *'relatively arbitrary imposition of the whims of anthropological fashion on particular places,'* (Appadurai 1986: 358) and concentrate on the way local people perform, perceive and explain their own spatial and social practices with reference to the cult of *Tudi Gong*.

The reader may have noticed that the first two chapters do not have a concluding part or a detailed theoretical discussion on topics that the data may generate. They present, however, a disseminated and discrete reflection of my own senses and questions which have arisen during my presence in the field. I am aware that this does not follow the standard ethnographic monograph, but it raises a serious anthropological issue. I argue, in fact, that a 'view from place,' both as a theoretical concept and as a specific spatial and social place with its power to generate senses and practices, may question some anthropologists' overinflated emphasis on concerns in the field which may derive from theoretical dispositions that are the anticipatory product of the anthropologists' socialisation prior to embarking upon fieldwork. They may be lured, in fact, into an over-regard for issues which may be imprudently preset by the way they are located in the discourse of a far away (academic) place. In my case, a 'view from place' has also engendered, in the very process of ethnographic writing, a constant and continuous *'reflexive awareness of its own writing, the possibility and limits of its own language, and a principled exploration of its mode of representations'* (Atkinson 1994:180).

Anthropologists' theoretical preoccupations and a reflection on one's own ethnographic writing call into play the central role of fieldwork in the construction of anthropological knowledge. The recognition that

in anthropology the main condition of knowledge is still related to the individual fieldwork, which cannot be conceived independently of the subject; there is no experience apart from the experienter, no knowledge without a knower (Hastrup & Hervik 1994: 227),

opens interesting discussions which, I feel, should inform both the ethnographic process and final product. The *personality* or the *power of place*, I suggest, is primarily and most evidently captured by the senses and emotions. These have often been considered as hindrance towards the construction of anthropological knowledge. Only recently are anthropologists becoming more aware of the fact that *'the production of anthropological knowledge is not comprehensible solely in the traditional scientific terms of objectivity and rationality as something distinguishable from subjectivity and intuition'* (Hastrup and Hervik 1994: 1).¹⁸ The main problem which I foresee is the extent to which anthropologists are able to 'translate' the human experience of senses and emotions, and the practices that specific places engender, into the 'discursive' mode of ethnographic writing. Archetti (1994: 26) points out that *'words, written or spoken, are only a limited means of entry for interpreting identities, history, societies or cultures... This world is not only spoken or written, it is experienced. Admitting this fact is to admit not only the limits of writing but also the limits of anthropological analysis.'*

The indeterminacy of experience, therefore, and the spatial and temporal contingency of the ethnographic process makes the 'dis-placed' anthropologist's venture into 'writing cultures' a limited and hazardous task, especially when dealing with senses, emotions and experience of place. A genuine encounter with other people and cultures located in specific places, and the creation of networks of human relationships and reciprocity, which are highly-valued in any Chinese context, can break the boundaries between anthropology's too great an emphasis on methodological and theoretical issues, and the 'senses' that are felt in the practice of everyday life and told in the narratives of specific people and places. Sharing, somehow, the same 'senses' of place of the people he/she is attempting to 'write about,' the anthropologist's ethnographic account may become a more 'placed' way to represent different 'voices' as well as 'silences,' including their own. Bruner cleverly stresses that

certainly every ethnographer is aware of the gap between the richness of lived experience in the field and the paucity of the written professional product, but the breach may be minimized to the extent that the ethnographer interprets her own experiences in the field at the same time that she interprets the experiences of other, and to the extent

¹⁸ See also Sousa de, R. 1980. The rationality of emotions. In *Explaining emotions* (ed.) A. Oksenberg Rorty. University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London.

that these separate interpretations are retained in the written ethnography (Bruner 1993: 9).

The 'lived experience in the field,' which I would describe as itself spatially contingent and temporally limited, has then to deal with the fact that *'reality - and I would add place - transcends the knower,'*¹⁹ both the anthropologist and the people among whom fieldwork is conducted. In Archetti's words, I would conclude this part by stressing that a reflection on one's own writing *'enables us to consider the written word of the anthropologists, the book, as a piece of reality: not because the authors "have been there" but because their voices, their writings, are not the only ones inhabiting a multiple and cultural landscape. They conjoin with others in creating the polyphony that prevails'* (Archetti 1994: 26), thus contributing to reduce the distance between ethnographic writing and the specific spatial practices these continuously engender, which are - or should be - the origin and the footing of its production.

On writing

While writing the first two chapters, I was constantly 'revisited' by the images, senses and practices that the two places had generated both in myself and in my raconteurs. I had the feeling that my own spatial practices and trajectories, which intertwined with those of the people with whom I interacted in the two sites, were taking a characteristic form while constructing the *'blank space, the page'* (de Certeau 1988: 134) of my ethnographic account. My impression was that the act of writing was in itself a form of spatial practice. I am not left alone with this impression.

Derrida has admitted, in an autobiographical aside, that writing for him is a special form of spatial configuring: 'I have the feeling that when... I write, when I build certain texts, the law for me, or the rule, has to do with the spacing of the text. What interests me is not really the content but some distribution in the space, the way what I write is shaped, spatially shaped.' (Casey 1997: 310).²⁰

In the process of my own writing, the initial undistinguished and silent maps of the two places - as they appeared to me when I first knew of them - would be gradually inhabited by people I had encountered, localities I had traversed and stories I had heard. As author - both researcher

¹⁹ Quoted in Hobart (1996: 13) who cites Inden, R. 1986. Orientalist constructions of India. *Modern Asian Studies*, 20.1, 402.

²⁰ Emphasis added. Casey quotes *Philo-sophe, Archi-tecte*, a public discussion at Cooper Union, New York, September 28, 1988, p. 14 of transcript.

and writer - I think that the *genius loci* ²¹ of those two places has dictated a writing which is '*spatially shaped*' not only in its content, but also in its form. I will expand more on this assumption by highlighting two views, which, I feel, are particularly related to my own analysis, brought forward by Agar and de Certeau.

Agar (1995) examines '*the story of creative nonfiction (CN) as a candidate parable for ethnography's current struggles*' (1995: 115) in reducing the distance between ethnographic process and product. It is not my intention to introduce and discuss the historical development of CN, but to pinpoint some of its features and techniques, which, I feel, may shed some light on the way the first two chapters have been constructed.

Firstly, by employing a *scenic method*,

the writer shows more than tells. Situations are recreated for the reader, so that he or she can see and hear, smell and touch, listen to the dialogue, feel the emotional tone. Detailed scenes pull the reader in, involve him or her in the immediacy of the experience (Agar 1995: 118).

I have to emphasise that the intent of the first two chapters is to invite the reader to become acquainted with *Datong* district and *Yongxing* village in the same way as I did. The telling of the stories about the two places seems to have generated spatial narratives in which the same act of telling or retelling has had the power to *show the places* in which those stories were told. In my ethnographic writing, the *telling* and the *showing* are positioned dialectically: the one provokes the other and vice-versa, or the one is contained in the other.²² In this respect, the relationship between *telling stories* and *showing places* resembles de Certeau's concept of *stories as metaphorai* (Athens' vehicles of mass transportation)²³ in which he points out that '*narrative structures have the status of spatial syntaxes*' (de Certeau 1988: 115).

²¹ By *genius loci*, I intend the typical character of a place, as shown by the feelings and senses it produces in both the anthropologist and people 'on the ground.'

²² This recalls to my mind the Chinese saying which goes 詩中有畫，畫中有詩 (*Shi zhong you hua, hua zhong you shi*). Literally, it can be translated '*there is a picture in the poem and a poem in the picture*.' In other words, one may say that a poem or a writing show the picture/image they describe and that a painting/picture may have the quality of a poem. Can the re-created spatiality of Chinese 'poetry' be expanded to the pictorial characteristic of Chinese characters, thus making the interconnection between Freire's *reading and writing the world and the world* more apparent and the *scenic method* of CN a feature which should inform ethnographic writing, or, at least, part of it?

²³ See the *Introduction* to this thesis, the concluding part of my theoretical approach: *Place and senses of place*.

Secondly, through **character development**,

the writer centers the story on a few rounded characters, real characters that the reader gets to know and watches develop as he or she follows them from scene to scene. Readers may also slip into and out of different points of view (Agar 1995: 118).

In the chapter on *Datong* district, however, the character development of the story seems to be embodied by the various *Tudi Gong* temples which tell the reader, while he or she traverses the temples' recreated scenes, of the fragments of their own history and development. They also introduce several perspectives from which to examine the cult of *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan. These will be introduced and discussed in the second section of this thesis.

The development of the human characters is subordinated to the scenic and historical presentation of the temples and the places in which they are sited. People's presence in the text, in fact, is given space to the extent it furnishes elements to construct or reconstruct a biography of each temple and whether it contributes to the knowledge of both the *Tudi Gongs* and of the localities they protect. The chapter on *Yongxing* village, on the contrary, develops around a few human characters, particularly *Lai guzhang* and his family, who introduce, tell and show the village in its various *scenes* of everyday life.

The reader might have noticed that I used different methodologies in my opening chapters. In chapter one I began my account by positioning the various *Tudi Gong* temples in the district and then proceeded to recount local histories, a metaphorical journey from '*Tudi Gong*' to '*specific places*.' On the other hand, in chapter two I began by narrating people's sense of attachment and belonging to place/community, to then introduce the local *Tudi Gong* and its spatial and social configuration, a journey, as it were, from '*place*' to '*Tudi Gong*.' The differential approach shows, in my view, the distinct processes which I employed during fieldwork in the district and in the village and the degree to which they have informed the narrative development of the first two chapters.

Thirdly, through the **plot**,

the writer selects and arranges details to build dramatic tension. Parallel narratives, foreshadowing, and flashbacks are among the devices used (Agar 1995: 118).

In the narrative development of the two chapters several interconnected voices can be heard in the text: those of the people - usually written down on the spot or after a few hours; my own voice recorded in the same evening or after a few days; and those of other texts which, I felt, could clarify and/or contribute to a wider understanding my own and my raconteurs' stories.

Finally, by means of **authorial presence**,

*like a novelist, the CN writer is the voice behind - or perhaps in - the story. He or she is the Jamesian **organizing consciousness**, the force that makes coherent meaning through skillful rendering of the details, a coherent meaning that, like good literature, should offer moral advice on one of the eternal human dilemmas (Agar 1995: 118).*

By emphasising the process in ethnography, the author, who, in my case is both researcher and writer, appears in the text as he or she was in the field. As in the field, so in the text, there is the risk of hiding behind people and places or of playing a 'prima donna' role. In both cases the textual construction may be affected either by an impersonal and detached writing, in which the content/product may take precedence over the form/process, or by '*putting the personal self so deeply back into the text that it completely dominates, so that the work becomes narcissistic and egotistical*' (Bruner 1993: 6). An ongoing and reflexive awareness of one's own theoretical approach, fieldwork strategies and writing modes may, I believe, contribute towards giving an ethnographic account and its author more credibility and authority.

The main features and techniques of the *creative nonfiction* writing delineated above offer interesting indications of the extent to which my own ethnographic writing seems to be *spatially shaped*. The dialectical relationship between *stories* and *places*, I argue, generates an ethnographic writing in which the *telling* is contained in the *showing* and vice-versa. In addition, by stressing the process in ethnography, the presence of the author in the text may be indicative of the way he or she was in the field.

A further question which has to be tackled, with which I started off this chapter, refers to the extent to which the first two chapters exhibit differential forms of ethnographic presentation and writing. The point was put to me that the first two chapters seem to portray a univocal writing style: the narrative one.²⁴ Where I would emphasise difference, some critics might see limited variation on a dominantly narrative theme.

A first reaction to this observation is that there can be different narrative styles as we have differential, multiple, overlapping or contrasting senses of place and spatial practices. These, in turn, as I have argued, were 'dictated' by the spatial and social characteristics of the two places where I conducted my fieldwork. As a theoretical and initial answer to this question, I suggest that de Certeau's (1988: 118-20) concept of **tour and map**²⁵ may indicate the

²⁴ On the importance of narrative style in scientific discourse see Richardson, L. 1995. Narrative and sociology. In *Representation in ethnography* (ed.) J. Van Maanen. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

²⁵ De Certeau borrows - and expands - the concept of *tour* and *map* from Linde, C. & W. Labov 1975. Spatial networks as a site for the study of language and thought. *Language* 51, 924-39.

differential writing mode which, I feel, characterises the first two chapters. De Certeau writes that

*in a very precise analysis of descriptions New York residents gave of their apartments, C. Linde and W. Labov recognize two distinct types, which they call the **map** and the **tour**. The first is of the type: "The girls' room is next to the kitchen." The second: "You turn right and come into the living room." Now, in the New York corpus, only three percent of the descriptions are of the **map** type. All the rest, that is, virtually the whole corpus, are of the **tour** type... (de Certeau 1988: 118-9).*

Two observations can be raised here. Firstly, the description has, as its focus, an urban environment: the city of New York and, secondly, as de Certeau himself points out, in the description the *map* type is contained, although in a minimal part, in the *tour* type. The coexistence of the two types in a single description is indicative of the fact that

*description oscillates between the terms of an alternative: either **seeing** (the knowledge of an order of places) or **going** (spatializing actions). Either it presents a **tableau** ("there are..."), or it organizes **movements** ("you enter, you go across, you turn...") (de Certeau 1988: 119).*

Having pointed out the possible oscillation - or coexistence - between the two types in a single description, the main question, I feel, regards the degree of dominance of one type over the other and the extent to which different places can generate different narrative modes in which one type dominates over the other. If one agrees, with de Certeau, that the *itinerary/tour* type and the *map* type express 'two symbolic and anthropological languages of space. Two poles of experience' (de Certeau 1988: 119), I wonder whether it would be possible, notwithstanding oscillations and coexistences, to associate the *tour* mode with the writing on Datong district and the *map* mode with the writing on Yongxing village.

It must be said, however, that I employ the *tour/map* concept merely as a theoretical device which seems to have the potential of indicating a *different language of space and experience and practice of place*. This, I suggest, may be caught in the differential senses of place, of both myself and the people I interacted with in the two locales, towards the city district and the countryside village.

If, as argued above, ethnographic writing is not regarded as an isolated occurrence from the ethnographic field (the former, in fact, should re-present the latter), then a certain degree of variation should be evident in the two writings, given the fact that there was variation in the fields. In addition the *tour/map* concept may also be shown to be a suitable theoretical device which is capable of highlighting and encouraging a shifting sense and practice of anthropology today.

**Tudi Gong temples, senses of place and ethnographic writings:
on Datong district and Yongxing village**

Naples is a city that has the structure of a novel. The streets are full of stories that call out to be transcribed. But Naples can only be a Baroque and Surrealist novel, always unfinished, unresolved, contradictory, in which the apotheosis of Catholicism and blasphemy coexist.

Tahar Ben Jelloun, *Il Mattino* (1989)²⁶

Naples, as Taipei, as any contemporary metropolis, 'is for many the chosen metaphor for the experience of the modern world. In its everyday details, its mixed histories, languages and cultures, its elaborate evidence of global tendencies and local distinctions, the figure of the city, as both a real and an imaginary place, apparently provides a ready map for reading, interpretation and comprehension' (Chambers 1994: 92). However, as Chambers continues, the map does not seem to convey 'the palpable flux and fluidity of metropolitan life and cosmopolitan movement' (Chambers 1994: 92). There seems to be, in other words, some resistance on the part of the city to being captured, to being clearly defined, to being topographically reduced into the territory of anthropological analysis and ethnographic accounts (= the map).²⁷ Thus, maps may help one to find an orientation in a place which appears to be confused and unfamiliar; may suggest trajectories to be followed or to be avoided; may give an approximation of the distances between objects already reached or to be reached. Maps may give to their readers/decipherers a sense of the spatial and temporal characteristics of the place depicted.

They cannot do more than that.²⁸ In de Certeau's words, it is only when one starts to *practice place*, touring it, choosing itineraries out of it, that a specific place starts to *tell stories*. Stories

²⁶ Quoted in Chambers (1994: 104, plate 2).

²⁷ I often recalled to my mind, during my fieldwork in the city of Taipei, the views of several Taiwanese and foreign anthropologists regarding doing fieldwork in the city: 'it is too confusing, too tiring, too unstable and terribly fragmented.' I would agree with this. However, in the same process of fieldwork I have learned to see *confusion, tiredness, instability and fragmentation* as revealing a sense of the city which, as my Taiwanese friends, I experienced personally and, later on, of the implications that this would have on my re-presenting it in my ethnographic account.

²⁸ Bourdieu has written that 'it is significant that **culture** is sometimes described as a map; it is the analogy which occurs to an outsider who has to find his way around in a foreign landscape and who compensates for his lack of practical mastery, the prerogative of the native, by the use of a model of all possible routes' (Bourdieu 1989: 2). The analogy, however, seems to reduce 'culture' as a stable and fixed terrain which does not leave much room for the creation and recreation of culture itself. The analogy of 'culture' as a 'tour' may probably be a more suitable one by which to express the vitality and the continuous and often frenetic changes which characterise 'culture' in the city.

which are inscribed in the places one tours and which '*call out to be transcribed.*' The city, in fact,

does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked with scratches, indentations, scrolls. (Calvino 1974: 11).

In the first chapter I hope to have communicated the process through which I became familiar and '*practised the district*' and, gradually, was able to *transcribe* the variegated display of localised *stories* and *histories*. The city of *Taipei* and *Datong* district in particular, seem to have compelled me towards finding my 'walking pathways' in the confusion and vitality of the metropolis. *Tudi Gong* temples gave me some kind of 'fixed reference point' in the flux of the city and of the district's everyday life. *Tudi Gong* temples have become, to a certain extent, 'written words' in a 'mobile' and 'polyphonic' city such as *Taipei*.

In addition, visiting temples, taking part in religious celebrations, or simply walking on the streets of the district, I had to seize the chance of getting in touch with people. The lived experience of the city, in fact, can be rather disconcerting. It is only with footsteps that the ethnographic story can begin to find his/her feet by letting one's own path intertwine with those of the 'other': *'their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of those realm systems whose existence makes up the city'* (de Certeau 1988: 97).

In the various *Tudi Gong* temples in *Datong* district, the 'chance' of getting in touch with people was very much dictated by their specific characteristics and atmosphere. As I have already pointed out in chapter one, some temples were more organised and frequented by worshippers, others were often quite deserted. The strategy which I employed was, therefore, that of walking from one temple to another, stopping for a while at each site. This was done frequently over a period of nine months and, later on, for another three months. For convenience to the reader, I present below some background information which I wrote during my main fieldwork in the district.

On 30th December 1994, I went to visit, for the first time, several Tudi Gong temples in Datong, one of the oldest districts in Taipei city. Mr. Gao kindly accompanied me. He was introduced to me by my Taiwanese language teacher Mr. Fang. One day, during class, teacher Fang told me,

you know, yesterday I was teaching Taiwanese on one of the broadcasting radio stations of Taiwan. I was explaining a few Taiwanese proverbs on Tudi Gong and I also said that one of my students was researching on Tudi Gong. My teaching programme, then, became a call-in programme. Several people telephoned to invite you to go to their places and study their Tudi Gong temples. I could not believe it. One of the people who called suggested that you should get in touch with Mr. Gao and Mr. Lin, they are experts on Tudi Gong. We may go together to see them.

We went to meet both of them.²⁹ Mr. Gao Xian-Zhi was the owner of the famous Guting bookstore and publishing house in Taipei. He has written and edited several articles and books on Taiwanese religion and has also published two articles on two Tudi Gong temples in Datong district.³⁰ He seemed impressed by the fact that I had chosen Tudi Gong as a topic for a PhD thesis. *'Foreign and local anthropologists quite often prefer big temples, and they find it difficult to research in the city, especially Taipei. It is too confusing,' Mr. Gao pointed out. Why don't we go now to see some of the Tudi Gong temples in Datong district? I am more than willing to introduce them to you,'* he suggested.

Mr. Gao and I met very often, especially during my first two months of fieldwork in the district. Our main concern was to find out the location of the various Tudi Gong temples in Datong. It was not easy, given the fact that almost nothing has been written on them - not even the addresses. To those Mr. Gao already knew, we added some that we found together. We would guess the location of a Tudi Gong temple by observing the development of the district and, very often, our guess was right. We went through the district in a very systematic way that led us to believe that our list of temples was complete, *'but you never know, tomorrow a new Tudi Gong temple could be established,'* Mr. Gao pointed out to me.

It would have been almost impossible to find all the Tudi Gong temples in the district on my own. To Mr. Gao, therefore, goes my deepest gratitude for having introduced me to several temples both in Datong and in Taipei. During this first period, in fact, we often crossed the administrative boundaries of Datong district and went to Beitou, Shilin, Zhongshan, Wanhua, Zhongzheng, Wenshan, Zhonghe. Together we visited more than a hundred temples dedicated to Tudi Gong. We also took part in a Tudi Gong raojing (procession) in Neihu.³¹

²⁹ My deepest gratitude to Mr. Lin Han-Chang whom I went to visit a few times in his bookshop in the basement of the New Guanghua Market in Taipei. His views and knowledge about Tudi Gong were very inspiring and illuminating. For a detailed presentation of his work and 'hobby' refer to *Sinorama* 20.4, April 1995, 46-53, the article entitled *Lin Han-Chang, his life is an open book*.

³⁰ See bibliography.

³¹ See chapter five: *'Making Tudi Gong happy': the 弄土治公 Nong Tuzhi Gong procession*.

Before all this I also went several times to other places and temples. The cities of Jilong³² and Danshui, both located on the sea north of Taipei, had been my favourite destinations for a few months. There, I started to research on several Tudi Gong temples and attended various celebrations such as the Ghost Festival in Jilong.

This 'extensive and descriptive' stage - essential for a research topic such as Tudi Gong - gave me the opportunity to build a sufficient knowledge of a variety of temples and religious practices associated with them. I managed to create good connections with people and places and to look from a wider perspective at Taiwanese society and life in the city of Taipei.

This stage was followed by a more 'analytical and intensive' one which I did on my own. There is the risk with the study of Tudi Gong that one never stops finding and visiting new temples. By concentrating on Datong district, I aimed at a deeper understanding of each of the Tudi Gong temples and their territories, the places and the inhabitants where these temples were located.

My fieldwork schedule in the city was planned according to the main celebrations for Tudi Gong and for the main temples in the district: from the Weiya, the last Tudi Gong celebration during the lunar year, to the celebrations for Chenghuang birthday and, later on, to the second birthday of Tudi Gong - the 15th day of the 8th lunar month. During this period there was the first birthday of Tudi Gong - the 2nd day of the 2nd lunar month, Mazu and Baoan Gong celebrations.

Walking through the district and through the terrain of local knowledge was, admittedly, a rather *fragmented* experience. The first chapter, I feel, seems to reflect the degree of indeterminacy, variety and overlapping in the way people I met would talk about their temples, their place and themselves. In most cases, people knew only a little on the history and spatial dimensions of *Tudi Gong* temples. In addition, the lack of written literature made my attempt to write a *biography* of each temple in the district and the connection that these have with the local historical development very limited. My end-product, therefore, seems to portray a rather *fragmented* narrative, which, metaphorically, has taken the form of an ongoing and unfinished journey through the polivocality which makes up *Datong* district.

Yongxing village portrayed a different picture. The connections and friendships that I already had established before starting fieldwork, located me in a very privileged position among the inhabitants of *Yongxing*. It was a position, however, that was 'created' for me by the same villagers. The chapter on the village has, hopefully, already expressed my sense of having 'felt at home' in the village through the events I recount, the form of writing as well as my position in the same account.

³² Thanks to Mr. Jiang who introduced me to the city of *Jilong* and some of its *Tudi Gong* temples.

It is interesting to note that in the chapter on the village, the part on *Tudi Gong* comes at the end. There is, in fact, almost nothing written on the village as well as on its *Tudi Gong* temple. The oral data, have been dialogically constructed day after day, chat after chat with the people of *Yongxing*, until reaching some kind of understanding, although varied and not definite, on the role of *Tudi Gong* in the village and the sense of attachment to place/community of the villagers.

In the same process, I learned a great deal about the village, its inhabitants and its local histories. The form of writing and the construction of the chapter seem to relate to this frequency and quality of social interaction - due to the continuous presence and availability of villagers - and the sense of attachment and friendship, which has developed through the years, that I feel towards the village and its people.

In addition the compact spatial configuration of the village, as I have described and showed in chapter two, gives the idea of the village as an easily configurable social 'map,' as a familiar and 'apparently' fixed 'tableau,' which was characterised by frequent face to face relationships. Everything appeared to be in place in the village and any slight change in the practice of the everyday life would be quickly noticed and talked about among the villagers. In the small village of *Yongxing*, in fact, one cannot live anonymously. On the contrary social interactions and the creations of stable relationships with one's neighbours are very much sought after. There is a saying among the Taiwanese which encourages the importance of having good relationships with neighbours as '*close neighbours are better than relatives who live far away*' (遠親不如近鄰).

However, the village cannot be so easily patterned on a fixed social grid. A certain sense of stability which life in the village and, therefore, my writing about it seem to portray, has not precluded, as indicated, the continuous social mobility of its villagers over the last few decades and the impact on the village and its inhabitants of the dynamic social changes which have been occurring in contemporary Taiwan. The *Tudi Gong* and *Lin Peng* wooden plaque, on which one can 'read' the various 'paths' of those present in the village and of those who have left, seem to continually remind the villagers of these changes and of their attempt to adapt to them by reinforcing, through the cult of *Tudi Gong*, their sense of community and of attachment to their place. Personal and collective stories are contained in that small wooden plaque, which, through the voices of the villagers, especially my good friend *Lai guzhang*, were often told and re-told in the practice of everyday life.

Merely as a theoretical device, the concept of *tour* and *map* has helped to highlight the differential narrative style of the first two chapters, which, I feel, is the consequence of the differential *senses of place* and *spatial practices*, mine and those of the people I interacted with, that the two sites generated during fieldwork. Regarding the city, de Certeau stresses that

in narrations concerning apartments or streets, manipulations of space or 'tours' are dominant. This form of description usually determines the whole style of the narration.

*When the other form intervenes, it has the characteristic of being **conditioned** or **presupposed** by the first* (de Certeau 1988: 119).

Is it not possible, I argue, to reverse the above assumption and apply it to the narration regarding the village? A description of life in *Yongxing* village with its 'apparent' fixity and stability, as recounted by the same villagers, seems to have made the '*map*' mode dominant over the '*tour*' mode in my ethnographic account. It has related an image of the village as a *tableau*, in which the *seeing* (the knowledge of an order of places) dictates the *going* (spatialising actions). A certain fixity and monotony of life is given vitality through the *mental movements* (the tour) of its villagers, who, in the same act of *re-membering and re-telling* their *senses of place* and *senses of the past*, convey a sense of significance for both themselves and their place.

In addition, the 'apparent' simplicity and stability of the village everyday life should not '*lead anthropologists to construct simple models of the complex cultural processes involved in this life*' (Olwig & Hastrup 1997: 12), just as the experience of the city does not mean that '*people necessarily experience their lives as being entangled in complicated social, cultural and economic processes of global dimension*' (Olwig & Hastrup 1997: 12). In both cases, anthropologists should be more concerned with '*the way in which people create meaningful and manageable contexts of life in the modern world*' (Olwig & Hastrup 1997:12). The ongoing relationship between the city and the village, that Taiwan seem to have engendered in its process of social change,³³ seem to show that people's differential senses of the two places are mutually contained, experienced and told in their everyday narratives.

³³ See the first part of chapter three: *Positing some questions, Observing the city and the country*.

Questions in motion...

*From what I have developed so far, could the assumption be put forward, more decisively, that two different places can engender two differential **'poles of experience'** and **'spatial practices,'** and, therefore, **'two symbolic and anthropological languages - and, I would add, senses - of space/place'?***

*If one accepts de Certeau's view of **telling stories as metaphorai**, which, in the practice of everyday life, 'traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them' (1988: 115), can one also stresses that the **telling, reading and writing the world and the word** (see Freire above), are coexistent and interrelated in the ethnographic process?*

*From these views, would it be too hazardous to say that writings which narrate different places can portray a particular **inscription** (or metaphorically, one may say 'show and relate a distinctive trace or echo'), which **shows while telling** (see Agar's scenic method of CN) and which can affect and dictate the form places are narrated in ethnographic writing?*

*Could, a **'view from place'** reposition the role of the **author**, both researcher and writer, to a voice among others **in the text as in the field**, thus questioning his or her 'exclusive' authority in both sites?*

*Could the 'function' of the anthropologist as writer be seen as a **mediating nexus** in which different forces or voices (people, places and the same anthropological discipline) connect and weave in ethnographic writing?*

*I would be tempted to answer positively to each one of these questions, as would probably the reader. At this stage, in fact, the various theoretical and ethnographic trajectories presented in this chapter have already suggested possible answers to these questions, although I would not regard them as definitive and exhaustive. They have contributed, however, towards rendering in words a process of reflexivity on my ethnographic writing, fieldwork experience and theoretical approach and to highlight the extent to which the **'authority of place(s)'** has 'dictated' my ethnographic writings. I still intend to elaborate briefly on a few thoughts which this first section of the thesis has generated before moving to the second section which will focus particularly on the **'authority of Tudi Gong'** in the context of contemporary Taiwan.*

3.3 Concluding thoughts

As in the field so in the text...

In the proceeding sections of this third chapter, I have insinuated various terrains of investigations, almost in a 'circular' manner, which have, hopefully, allowed the reader and myself to reposition and expand on my ethnographic writings on *Datong* district and *Yongxing* village. The part on *Positing some questions* has shown that various, interconnected and overlapping factors have contributed to the distinctive construction of the first two chapters. As *in the field so in the text*, in fact, the construction of anthropological knowledge is an ongoing process in which different 'poles' of experience and interpretation, those of the anthropologist and those of the people 'on the ground,' are created and re-created in the same ethnographic process.

From places to spatial practices to ethnographic writings

The stress I posited on the ethnographic writing mode at the beginning of this chapter, as the possible indicator of the differentiation of the first two accounts, seems to have been superseded, in the same process of reflexivity, by the differential experience/senses of place which the two places generated, as the main cause of the differentiation in the presentation of the two accounts. My textual practices, therefore, seem to be the result of the spatial practices which the spatial and social characteristics of two places provoked both in myself and in the people I interacted with during fieldwork. Does the shift hint at the degree of 'fixation' in anthropology - and in social science in general - such that there is an inordinate emphasis on discourse, content and product at the expense of experience, form and process ?

The anthropologist as walker and voyeur

De Certeau also employs the concept of *tour* ('a discursive series of operations') and *map* ('a plane projection totalizing observations') to indicate the shifting relationship which occurs when passing from what he calls 'ordinary' culture, the *tour*, to scientific discourse, the *map* (de Certeau 1988: 119). The further spatial metaphors he employs are those of the *walker* and the *voyeur*. These have the potential, I suggest, to contribute towards clarifying the ongoing, and often contrasting, relationship between **experience, form and process** (the *tour*) and **discourse, content and product** (the *map*).

From the top of the World Trade Centre in New York, the aerial view of the city transforms the *walker* into a *voyeur*, like 'an *Icarus* flying above these waters, he can ignore the devices of *Daedalus* in mobile and endless labyrinths far below' (de Certeau 1988: 92). The risk of an aerial view of the city, or what has been called de Certeau's *bird's eye view* (Ahearne 1995:

178) or the '*abstract picture of the cartographer*' (Hastrup & Hervik 1994: 225), is that of *losing sight* of or, it would be better to say, *losing touch* with, the complex reality which makes up the experience of the city.

Regarding the *voyeur's view* or the *onlooker view*, de Certeau '*does not dispute the heuristic validity of such procedures, but challenges rather any implicit assumption that they master reality*' (Ahearne 1995: 177). However, I feel that to emphasise the product (the map) at the expense of the process (the tour) in ethnographic writing, would mean missing the act itself of passing by (de Certeau 1988: 97), '*the actual experience of the traveller*' (Hastrup & Hervik 1994: 225). While a 'view from above' may stress the claim to objectivity of the anthropological undertaking, a 'view from below' will, undoubtedly, give a more 'earthly' and 'bodily' touch to anthropologists' ethnographic accounts because

the ordinary practitioners of the city live 'down below,' below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk - an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers... whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it... The paths that correspond to each other in this intertwining, unrecognized poems of which each other body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility. It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness. The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold history that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other (de Certeau 1988: 93).

The inspiration of place and the senses

The *inspiration* that *place* can exercise on people, and the productions of 'bodily' and 'sensual' reactions to them as generative and constitutive of anthropological knowledge, is not much discussed in social analysis. On the contrary, either it is taken for granted or it is obstructed by a latent scientific positivism which, given its tendency to verify and objectify reality according to a supposed empiricism, runs the risk of continually perpetuating the Cartesian dichotomy between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. This, Hastrup has pointed out,

was the basis for the model of a sharp distinction between mind and body to which we have since then become accustomed. And it is this metaphysical dualism that has ever since been reflected in the subject-object dichotomy as basic for our knowledge of the world (Hastrup & Hervik 1994: 229).³⁴

³⁴ Hastrup quotes Bernstein, R. J. 1983. *Beyond objectivism and relativism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 115-16.

I feel that the relatively recent shift in anthropology, and well before that of social geography, towards issues concerning space and place has started to acknowledge the primary role of *experience* and *senses* as privileged *topoi* in the construction of anthropological knowledge as well as in attempting to reduce the dichotomy between *mind* and *body* and *subjectivity* and *objectivity*. *Senses*, for example, now seem to matter to social science to the extent that Lefebvre has put forward the assumption that '*the more carefully one examines space, considering it not only with the eyes, not only with the intellect, but also with the senses, with the total body, the more clearly one becomes aware of the conflicts at work within it...*' (Lefebvre 1991: 391). Senses, in fact, change, overlap, develop, degrade, wax and wane in the practice of everyday life.

Such conflicts may question a certain *congruence of place*, which sees places as uniform (is this the result of an objectification of place?), and set in motion an analysis of people's variegated experience of place as well as the anthropologist's own awareness and senses of the place in which he or she is conducting fieldwork. As the differential and even multiple senses of place which will be produced interrelate and overlap in the practice of everyday life so they should in ethnographic writings. The 'multilocution' or 'polyvocality' which will rise may be confusing for those accustomed to a structuralist analysis of society, but will certainly profit the practice of anthropology itself and reduce the distance between process and product in ethnographic accounts.

Section Two

Telling stories about the authority of Tudi Gong

Chapter four: The 'territories' of Tudi Gong

Chapter five: Fragments from 'popular tradition': telling stories and other representations of Tudi Gong

Chapter six: Tudi Gong: changing senses of place, community and identity



P74. Tudi Gong during funerals

During funerals, Tudi Gong 'guides' the soul of the deceased to the next life and 'tell stories' to comfort relatives and friends. On July 2nd, 1995, in Jiji, Mr. Xiao performed the role of Tudi Gong during the ritual.

Chapter Four

The 'territories' of Tudi Gong

4.1 On the territories of Tudi Gong: an introduction

4.2 Tudi Gong: the spirit of the Yin and Yang worlds

4.3 'Delimiting, guarding and purifying the territory':

the 放軍-收軍 Fang Jun - Shou Jun ritual in Datong district, Taipei city

4.4 Discussion

4.1 On the 'territories' of Tudi Gong: an introduction

My fieldwork in Taiwan has led me to discuss and speculate on the extent to which *Tudi Gong* may be regarded as a 'collective name' (總稱). *Tudi Gong* connotations and functions, in fact, seem to vary according to the location over which He presides and the territory He is protecting, thus indicating a different angle of the multifarious Taiwanese attachments to and senses of *Tudi Gong*.

The following diagram shows the various *Tudi Gong* sites and connections as they have gradually appeared in the collection of my ethnographic data. I would suggest that these can be located on the two main territories/domains/worlds that so greatly characterise Chinese culture: the Yin 陰 and Yang 陽. *Tudi Gong* may be regarded as the spirit of the Yin and Yang worlds.

土地公：陰陽二界之神

Tudi Gong: the spirit of the Yin and Yang worlds

The 陽 Yang characteristic:

Urban neighborhoods and rural villages

Shops, restaurants and offices

Factories

Farmlands

Domestic dwellings

Temples

Taxi, cars and recreational areas

The 陰 Yin characteristic:

Tombs

Funerals

Connection with Chenghuang, Dazhong Ye and Youying Gong

Association with gambling and prostitution

FT4. *Tudi Gong: the spirit of the Yin and Yang worlds*

I would like to invite the reader, however, to consider the fact that the two 'worlds' and the corresponding *Tudi Gong* characteristics should not be regarded as clearly distinct. There is a good degree of overlapping, intermingling and ambiguity between these two domains as well as

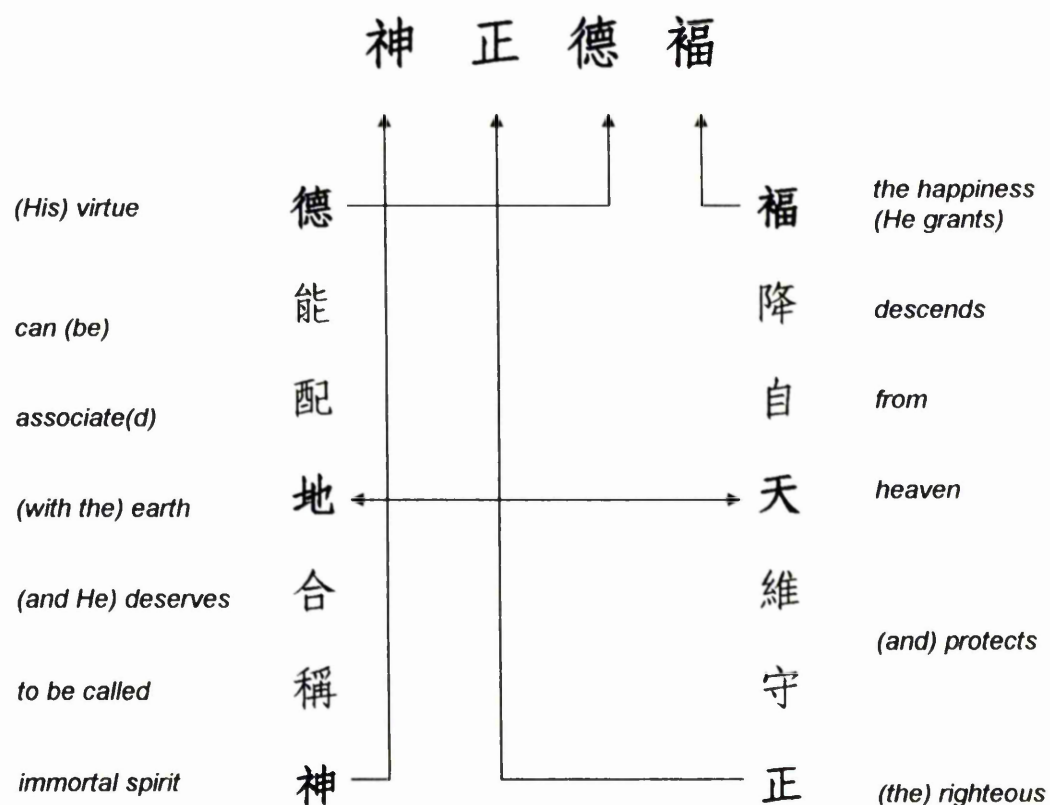
a certain flexibility in the way *Tudi Gong's Yin and Yang* characteristics seem to function in the practice of everyday life. The explanations I will be giving below for each site, therefore, are not intended to be exhaustive. In addition, the spatial and temporal contingency of my fieldwork and the variety of *Tudi Gong* connections and functions has forced me to concentrate on some and to merely mention others. The latter, however, are by no means necessarily less important. They all contribute towards building a picture, as complete as possible, of the cult of *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan.

In the following two parts of this chapter, I will engage firstly in an overall presentation and discussion of the cult of *Tudi Gong* by focusing on His various 'positions,' 'functions' and 'connotations' as imagined and experienced in the Taiwanese practice of everyday life. Secondly, the display of the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* 放軍 - 收軍 ritual, as performed in *Datong* district, will highlight the relationship between *Chenghuang* and *Tudi Gong* as well as the 'authority' they exercise on a specific and circumscribed place in the city of *Taipei*. A final speculative section will attempt to posit the ethnographic data presented in this chapter in the context of a wider discussion of Chinese conceptualisations and representations of place and space with special reference to *Tudi Gong* and local religious practices.

4.2 Tudi Gong: the spirit of the Yin and Yang worlds

The Yang characteristic of Tudi Gong

Tudi Gong 's Yang characteristic seems to be expressed by the title he is often addressed by: 福德正神 *Fude Zhengshen*.¹ One of the most common 'couplets' (對聯),² usually found at the entrance to *Tudi Gong* temples, explains this title as well as the main connotations and functions which people attribute to this spirit.



FT5. One of the most common Tudi Gong 'couplets'

1 Schipper translates *Fude Zhengshen* as the 'orthodox spirit of good merit' (Schipper 1977: 660). Baker translates it as the 'true god of good fortune and virtue' (Baker 1979: 2).

2 For a presentation of various Tudi Gong's *duilian* see Lin Mei-Rong (1990: 295-316) and Jiang Yi-Zhen (1994: 89-102).

The title *Fude Zhengshen*, therefore, could be translated as 'the righteous immortal spirit of (heavenly) happiness (and) virtue (on earth),' and refers to a story that Lefeuve (1990: 2) reports as follows:

a prefect (大夫), a Zhou official, was sent to a remote place. As he did not come back for a long time, his daughter set out to find him. She was accompanied by a faithful servant who was named Zhang Ming-De 張明德. On the road they were surprised by a snowstorm. The servant put all his clothes on the daughter to protect her. She was saved but he himself froze to death. At that time, bright characters appeared in the sky: 南天門大仙福德正神, which can be translated as 'great immortal of the southern door of heaven, the true spirit bringing happiness.'

The prefect erected a temple for him and King Wu of Zhou gave him the title of Houtu 后土, 'Sovereign of the Soil.' Today, Houtu is inscribed on the altar of the 'Lord of the Land' (Tudi Gong) erected on the side of the tombs and the appellation 'true spirit bringing happiness' is written in the temples built for him.³

Between *Tian* and *Di*, Heaven and Earth, Yin and Yang, *Tudi Gong* seems to be functioning as a mediator between the human world and the supernatural one. With regard to his mediatory connotations, it is interesting to point out that during worship people usually burn three kinds of paper money to *Tudi Gong*. I was told that the first is for *Tudi Gong* himself, the other two would be given by *Tudi Gong* to other spirits of the Chinese pantheon, in case he is not able to grant the worshipper's request.

The Yang characteristic of *Tudi Gong* is shown in the following sites:

Urban neighbourhoods and rural villages are dotted with temples dedicated to *Tudi Gong* and, to a certain degree, are representative of the people living on those territories. As the first temples established when settling in a new place, these temples can tell us of those places/local histories, changes and developments which have happened through time. *Tudi Gong*, therefore, may be seen, in the very words of the majority of my raconteurs, as the 社區之神, 'the spirit of a community living on a specific territory.' His authority 'is strictly confined to his own vicinity... The T'u-ti of one part of the village then has no control over the rest of that village. If the God of the Soil of the east mountain goes to the west mountain,

³ As a variant of this story, *Tudi Gong* is also represented as a 'slave who zealously guarded the money of his wealthy master - as Shou-ts'ai-nu' (Schipper 1977: 661, see also note 39, p. 772), thus exemplifying the role of *Tudi Gong* as guardian of individual and community wealth.

he will not be efficacious, so that the T'u-ti at the east end is powerless at the west end' (Chamberlayne 1966: 171).⁴

Such temples are usually very small, the biggest ones hardly occupy the space of a room. A friend of mine explained the smallness of *Tudi Gong* temples by telling the following story:

once upon a time, Yuhuang Dadi 玉皇大帝, the Emperor of all the spirits of the Chinese pantheon, wanted to reward Tudi Gong for his taking very good care of the land and the people who inhabited it. He said to him: 'Take this arrow and shoot it, all the land between you and the arrow will be yours.' Tudi Gong did not want to deprive his people of a lot of land so he shot the arrow vertically. The arrow fell close to his feet. This is why the temples dedicated to Tudi Gong are so small.

This is a further example which emphasises the generosity of the good-hearted *Tudi Gong*, but which seems to contrast with a variety of *Tudi Gong* temples I have seen in Taiwan over the last few years. *Tudi Gong* temples, in fact, have not only increased in number but also in size, especially in cities. The development of Taiwanese society over the last two decades has set in motion a process of refurbishing, restructuring and enlargement of *Tudi Gong* temples as well as temples dedicated to other deities or family ancestral halls.

I was amazed to see how many temples were under reconstruction during my stay in Taiwan. *'Our deities and our ancestors have to share our fortune and standard of living. To give them a better place is a way of thanking them for having blessed us and our families,'* a successful businessman pointed out. As Weller stresses, it should also be said that through the building or renovation of *Tudi Gong* temples, the communities to which these temples belong, *'are advertising their wealth, competing with other nearby communities, and, at least apparently, showing their loyalty to Taiwanese traditions in the place of government attempts to discourage large expenses on popular religion'* (Weller 1987: 38).

My research has focused especially on those neighbourhood/village *Tudi Gong* temples which have, by some indiscernible process, collectively been agreed upon to become the loci for the community worship in a relatively circumscribed place.⁵

What happens if families or individuals move to another place? While it is true to say that moving to a new place is usually felt as entering the jurisdiction of another *Tudi Gong* (Wolf 1974: 135) and *'worshipping a new Earth God'* (Weller 1987: 38), I would challenge the

⁴ Chamberlayne quotes the proverbs from C. H. Plopper 1926. *Chinese religion seen through the proverbs*. Shanghai, p. 32, Proverb 121. The building of new *Tudi Gong* temples may also come as a result of factional rivalries over territorial disputes and appropriation of land.

⁵ Sangren points out that, *'the decision to build a T'u Ti Kung shrine may be undertaken either individually or collectively, and there are many T'u Ti Kung shrines, especially in remote locales, that do not function as foci for communal rituals. Should population in the vicinity increase, however, a second, always collective decision to convene annual communal rituals may follow'* (Sangren 1987: 62).

assertion by Weller that these areas 'are mutually exclusive: no one worships at more than one Earth God temple' (Weller: 1987:38). Often, in fact, I have met people who, during special celebrations, would worship especially at the local *Tudi Gong* temple as well as at the *Tudi Gong* temple in the neighborhoods they used to live, or at the temples around which relatives and friends reside, or at some *Tudi Gong* temples which are known as having more 'ling.' In some cases, people would also join *Tudi Gong* temples associations located away from their own neighbourhood. It must be said, however, that this phenomenon has been mainly detected in the city of *Taipei*.

In more general terms, one can speculate on the extent to which a dual or multiple sense of belonging and attachment to *Tudi Gong* temples in contemporary urban Taiwan is growing among people. There seems to be, in fact, no consistent pressure on corporate closed communities or exclusive spheres of identification. Such a degree of flexibility seems to have partly developed from the same configuration of the city, which allows little room for clear-cut community boundaries, as well as from the social mobility of the Taiwanese. The recent stress on 'building local communities' is certainly indicative of people's diminishing sense of belonging and identity with specific communities.

Furthermore, in several cases I have noticed that physical 'closeness' to one's own residence more than the sense of belonging to a local community is taken into account when deciding to which *Tudi Gong* temple to go for worship. This is especially the case for those elderly people who worship *Tudi Gong* on a regular basis. There is no need even to go to the bigger temples of *Mazu*, *Baosheng Dadi* or *Chenghuang* as several *Tudi Gong* temples in *Datong* district exhibit the same and even more statues. It seems that some *Tudi Gong* temples in the city of *Taipei* have become miniature versions of bigger temples.

To satisfy the request of local inhabitants, often a statue of a lesser-known divinity and more place-based deities may be put in the local *Tudi Gong* temple thus making it possible, in some cases, to discern the place of origin of some of the people living in the neighbourhood. There seems to be no dismay among the worshippers if a new statue is added to the already blossoming religious pantheon. '越多越好,' 'the more the better,' seems to be the common law in such matters. Temples keepers, too, would agree. One of them told me, '**why not! More people will come to this temple to worship.**' Not only would the number of worshippers increase, but also the source of temple income.

Regarding the religious pantheon shown in *Tudi Gong* temples it should also be said that there seems to be a striking diversity between the city and the countryside. In the countryside, for example, *Tudi Gong* temples usually only portray the statue of the spirit, accompanied, sometimes, by *Tudi Po* and/or the two subordinates *Wenban* and *Wuban*. The city's *Tudi Gong* temples display an overwhelming number of *Tudi Gong* statues as well as statues of other deities. The reason I was given by several temple keepers is that the Taiwanese people do not like to destroy or throw away religious statues. Thus, people who convert to Christianity or move abroad usually give their family statues to the temple in which they used to worship. In some places, the numbers of *Tudi Gong* statues I have seen in local temples was close to one

hundred. There is also the case of families that put their *Tudi Gong* statue in the local *Tudi Gong* temple (or sometimes in the *Chenghuang* temple) for a few weeks, sometimes months. **'Being together with his companions,'** these families hope that their *Tudi Gong* may acquire more *ling* from a temporary accommodation in the local temple. In such cases a donation would always be offered to the temple keeper for taking care of the family *Tudi Gong* for a while.

Shops, restaurants and offices usually have a small statue of *Tudi Gong* on a visible small altar fixed on the wall. In these cases he is thought of as a kind of *Cai Shen* - the deity of wealth - and is represented holding the *ruyi* 如意⁶ and the *yuanbao* 元寶.⁷

Because of the stress on *Tudi Gong* 'commercial' functions he is often referred to as 商業神, the 'commerce' spirit. A university professor suggested that, **'*Tudi Gong seems to have adjusted his functions and connotations, or it is better to say, his functions and connotations seem to have been adjusted to suit Taiwanese society, which has developed from an agricultural society to an industrialised one in a relatively short span of time.***'

In an agricultural society the symbolic exchange between humans and deities was done, for example, through employing agricultural products. **'When I was a boy - Mr. Lin told me - I used to live close to Guanyin mountain, opposite Danshui. With my family I would often go to the local Tudi Gong temple. During special celebrations, each one of us would give two oranges to Tudi Gong and take one which other villagers had already presented to the spirit. We would, then, take it home and eat Tudi Gong luck.'** Such an exchange would also signify, I was later told, a strengthening of relationships among local inhabitants.

Today, such an exchange often happens through money. Just behind the *Tudi Gong* temple at the top of *Nanshan* 南山 (southern mountain) in *Zhonghe* 中和, there is a small altar with a very old *Tudi Gong* statue. By making a money offering to the spirit, one can take one Taiwanese Dollar from two small boxes located on the sites of the statue. **'That's Tudi Gong money, I was promptly told, it's good luck.'**

With a friend of mine, once I went to the *Nanshan Tudi Gong* temple late at night. Going up the mountain, we were not alone. Walking, riding or driving were young couples trying to find a solitary spot to admire *Taipei* night scenery, and people who just wanted to enjoy some fresh air after one of those hot and humid days of *Taipei* Summer. Over the last few years, in fact, *Nanshan* has become a tourist attraction and a relaxing site for the people of *Taipei*. There

⁶ The *ruyi* is a kind of sceptre, made of wood or jade.

⁷ The *yuanbao* is a silver or gold ingot which was used in old China.

were also those whose destination was the *Tudi Gong* temple to worship, to gamble or just out of curiosity.

The road, which has been recently built, passes by several temples dedicated to a variety of deities until reaching, there on the top, the *Tudi Gong* temple. ***'What an interesting reverse of the hierarchy of the religious pantheon,'*** I thought while walking the last stairs that would lead us in front of the temple. Other 'religious' localities - *Zhinan Gong* 指南宮, for instance - exhibit a different geography of temples positioning where a *Tudi Gong* temple is the first stage one goes through and usually stops for a while before visiting temples dedicated to other 'more important' deities.

What I noticed once in front of the temple was a group of young people - mainly men in their mid-thirties - who were all standing at the paper money burner. They were the employees of a *Taipei* House Selling company. Still in their unmistakable white shirts and ties, they had come to the *Tudi Gong* temple to thank the spirit for the houses sold during the past year and ask for his blessing in order to sell more houses during the following one.

The Chinese New year, in fact, had just been celebrated and the *Tudi Gong* birthday was approaching. On *Tudi Gong* paper money they wrote all the addresses of the houses their company had sold during the past year and would first shout each one of them and then burn them in the temple burner.

Factories often have, somewhere in the compound, a *Tudi Gong* statue or image. His protection here is specially sought for safety in the work place and against possible accidents on the job. However, I was told that recently people working in factories seem to prefer the statue of *Guan Gong*. ***'Tudi Gong is too refined (斯文) and elegant for workers. We prefer a tougher guy like Guan Gong.'***⁸

Farmlands may have a small *Tudi Gong* temple at one side so that farmers could ask *Tudi Gong* for an abundant harvest and that their products may be sold on the market. For the same reason, *Tudi Gong* temples may be located near rivers or water used for agricultural work. *Lin Shi-Qi*, a young artist from *Taizhong* now living in *Yongxing* village, pointed out that for the Chinese water signifies 'wealth' (錢財). Usually *Tudi Gong* temples are positioned facing areas where there is water ***'meaning that people hope that Tudi Gong would not allow this wealth to be wasted by letting it run to other places.'***

Domestic dwellings have the image of *Tudi gong* on the family altar, close to the ancestral tablet. *Tudi Gong* is able to guarantee communication with the 'celestial court' (天庭) after the death of a beloved one. He is thought of as *Fu Shen* 福神, the 'deity of happiness and

⁸ The statue of *Guan Gong*, however, is also exhibited in a good number of shops I have seen in *Taipei* city.

good fortune.' Families who have a statue of the spirit in the house, I was told, would generally worship at home and only rarely go to a *Tudi Gong* temple.

Temples where *Tudi Gong* is not the main deity also have his statue. There, he takes care of the temple compound. In the bigger temples of *Datong* district I noticed several times that worshippers would normally stop first at the *Tudi Gong* altar before worshipping the main deity of the temple. During celebrations of a temple's main deity *Tudi Gong* opens the procession and guides it through the neighborhood. There is also the case that a local *Tudi Gong* temple may be asked to guide the procession. There seems not to be any specific rule regarding which *Tudi Gong* should guide such processions: in 1995, the *Mazu* procession in *Datong* district, for example, was guided by the temple *Tudi Gong*, *Chenghuang* procession, on the contrary, was led by a local *Tudi Gong* temple, the *Shuangfu Gong*. It has to be added that statues of *Tudi Gong* - and sometimes those of *Guan Gong* and *Mazu* - are becoming more frequent also in Buddhist temples.

Taxi, cars and recreational areas. I have seen and been told of taxi drivers putting a statue of *Tudi Gong* in their cars. A friend of mine pointed out to me that he once took a taxi that had its front seat removed to make room for a small *Tudi Gong* shrine. There are, however, several other deities such as *Guan Gong*, *Mazu*, *Santaizi*, *Guanyin* as well as various *Buddhas*, who would either be associated with *Tudi Gong* or exhibited on their own. It does seem quite widespread that people who have just bought new cars believe that a blessing from the deities as well as carrying their statues may guarantee better safety on the roads. Taiwan, in fact, has a very high rate of car accidents every year and deaths on the roads are second only to cancer related deaths. Outside a *Tudi Gong* temple in *Zhongshan* district, I once witnessed the blessing of a new car that had just been bought by a local inhabitant. The ritual was quite simple. **'After having had a word with *Tudi Gong* telling him to protect my travelling,'** a man in his early forties told me, he burnt some paper money and, with it he ran three times around his new car. The man was also planning to buy a small *Tudi Gong* statue and put in his car.

Near train and coach stations, I have often seen small *Tudi Gong* shrines which would be visited before starting a journey. In contemporary Taiwan, in fact, *Tudi Gong* is also regarded as the protector of traveling and outdoor activities. In the previous pages, I have already stressed the fact that more and more recreational areas all over Taiwan have *Tudi Gong* temples or the space around several *Tudi Gong* temples has been transformed into recreational areas.

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P76

A Tudi Gong shrine in central Taiwan

- P77 *A Tudi Gong shrine in central Taiwan*
P78 *The Lai family altar in Yongxing village*



P79

P79. Elderly people at the Fude Gong in Shilin district, Taipei city

P80

P80. The 'mixed' religious pantheon in a Tudi Gong temple, Taipei city

P81
P82

*The Tudi Gong of the Cisheng temple 'guides' the Mazu procession,
Datong district, April 1995*



P83

P84

The Tudi Gong of the Fude temple takes part in the Mazu procession



P85 The Tudi Gong of the Shuangfu temple 'guides' the Chenghuang procession,
P86 Datong district, June 1995



The Yin characteristic of Tudi Gong.

Tombs. The Yin characteristic of *Tudi Gong* is most evident in His location near tombs. Here *Tudi Gong* becomes *Houtu* 后土, 'the guardian of the tomb.' As an elderly woman told me ***'He is the guardian of the dead as well as the place where the dead rest.'*** Traditionally, this would be just a stone with *Houtu* inscribed on it. Over the last few years, small statues of *Tudi Gong* are placed instead on the side of each tomb.

The fact that *Tudi Gong* is also *Houtu* is endorsed by a story that Schipper (1977: 661-62) reports as follows:

The legendary heroine Meng Chiang-nu, having lost her father, longed in vain for a husband. As Ch'in Shih-huang-ti was then building the Great Wall, he called up all young men. Han Chi-lang did not want to go and hid away from his home. On the fifth day of the fifth month (Tuan-wu festival) he was in the garden of Meng Chiang-nu's house. When she came out of the house, the lad hid in a tree above a pond. Meng Chiang-nu proceeded to bathe in the pond, whereupon she saw the image of the boy reflected in the water. She told him that, having seen her nude, he had to marry her. A wedding feast was held, but the old man who ran the general store was not invited. He reported Han Chi-lang to the authorities.

The young man died while doing forced labor at the Wall, and his corpse was incorporated in the structure. Meng Chiang-nu went to look for her husband. Her tears made the wall collapse and many skeletons were uncovered. An old man told her that the bones that would absorb her blood were those of her husband. She thus found the skeleton and as her tears fell upon them flesh grew anew on the bones. The old man told her that if she put the body in a bag, it would be easier to carry. She did so and it became a skeleton once again. Out of spite, Meng Chiang-nu transformed the old man into the guardian of her husband's grave.

The second part of the above story is also reported by Ahern (1973: 203-4) and Feuchtwang (1992: 95). In addition, Thompson (1988: 103-4), who bases his examination of the story on Ahern's version, also offers valuable insights and comments. These are all versions that the above authors collected during their fieldwork in Taiwan.

It is interesting to note that in Ahern's and Feuchtwang's versions there is no mention whatsoever of *Meng Chiang-nu* and her spouse *Han Chi-lang*. Oral tradition, possibly, seems to

have emphasized the latter part of the story. Despite slight differences, Chinese written versions of the story resemble Schipper's version and translation.⁹

The variations and the themes indicated by Schipper, Ahern, Feuchtwang and Thompson are, I feel, worth presenting and briefly exploring, especially those which particularly refer to *Tudi Gong*. For convenience to the reader, in the following pages the three versions of the story are presented (see page 201).

A first look at them shows that the main protagonists of the story are the 'wife' and the 'old man,' who is identified as *Tudi Gong* only in Feuchtwang's version. Ahern's version introduces *Tudi Ma* or *Tudi Po*, the wife of *Tudi Gong*, whose 'bad advice' given to the woman reflects the human characteristic which is often attributed to her in Chinese popular religious tradition, '***Tudi Po is egotistical (小氣), she does not want to give everybody the chance of getting rich and happy. We do not like her,***' I was told several times during fieldwork.

The 'good advice' that the old man *Tudi Gong* gives to the woman (Schipper's and Feuchtwang's versions) do allow the wife to find and revive the bones of the dead husband, who went to the Great Wall as a prisoner doing forced labour (Schipper's version), as a worker (Ahern's version), or as a soldier (Feuchtwang's version).

Through blood and tears and by carrying the bones in her arms, the woman witnessed the miracle only for a short while. Thompson thinks that,

the mingling of yin blood and yang bones has started to bring the corpse back to life... carrying the skeleton in her arms is tantamount to carriage in the womb, the yang bones being encapsulated as a yang foetus, developing toward a return to life. (Thompson 1988: 103).

Here, the theme of *fairness* comes on the scene: *Tudi Gong*, in fact, '*considered it unjust that her husband should be singled out from the other soldiers to be brought back to life*' (Feuchtwang 1992: 95). The tricks played on the woman and her responding trust in the deity: '*put the body in a bag*' (Schipper), '*carry the skeleton on her back*' (Ahern), and *Tudi Gong* who offers himself to guard the reviving bones while the woman went to find something to eat (Feuchtwang), somehow correct the old man's mistake.

By carrying the skeleton on her back '*the process of enwombment and nourishment (from the widow's tears) is ended*' (Thompson 1988: 103). *Tudi Gong's* principle of fairness both for the living and for the dead is thus assured: in the story fairness seems to take precedence over compassion.

In this regard, Schipper points out that '*the old gentleman who recognizes his monstrous error and corrects it brings to mind the Taoist ritual for the absolution of sins, accompanied as it were by a confession of one's errors. Such confessions were also prominent in the liturgy of the*

⁹ These can be found in Dong Fang-Yuan (1984: 421-22) and Wu Xi-Zhen (1989: 79-84).

politico-religious mass movement that arose during Han period and so profoundly influenced modern religion' (Scipper 1977: 662).

The fairness of *Tudi Gong* seems to produce anger and resentment in the woman (Feuchtwang 1992: 95). *Tudi Gong*, therefore, is punished by the woman. From now on he will have to be the guardian, represented by a stone, of her husband's bones.

As rightly suggested, '*T'u-ti-Kung, as Hou-t'u, prevents the intermingling of the living with the dead*' (Schipper 1977: 662) and so he keeps '*the dead dead*' (Feuchtwang 1992: 95). Thus, people's fear of the dead and of its potential power to become alive again is kept under control by a castigated *Tudi Gong*, whose ambiguous role in the story is, at the end, what people want him to play.

Schipper's version

...The young man died while doing forced labor at the Wall, and his corpse was incorporated in the structure.

Meng Chiang-nu went to look for her husband. Her tears made the wall collapse and many skeletons were uncovered. An old man told her that the bones that would absorb her blood were those of her husband. She thus found the skeleton and as her tears fell upon them flesh grew anew on the bones. The old man told her that if she put the body in a bag, it would be easier to carry. She did so and it became a skeleton once again.

Out of spite, Meng Chiang-nu transformed the old man into the guardian of her husband's grave.

Ahern's version

A long time ago an emperor wanted to build a great wall around his kingdom. To provide a labor force, he conscripted thousands of young men. Conditions were so terrible for the workers that many men died and were buried under or within the wall. When one young worker had not returned home for some time, his wife set out to find him. When she learned that he was dead, she cried until the entire wall fell down. Then in order to find her husband's bones, she bit off her finger tip and let the blood flow on the ground. Whenever the blood hit one of her husband's bones, that bone came up and joined together with the others until the skeleton was complete. People told her to carry the skeleton in her arms so that her tears would fall on it, making veins of blood on the bones, and resulting perhaps in a return to life. Just then, Tho-te-ma (the wife of Tho-te-kong, the earth god) offered different advice. She said it would be better if the woman were to carry the skeleton on her back. But as soon as the wife did this, for she readily accepted the advice of a goddess, the skeleton fell apart. Tho-te-ma gave this bad advice because she was feeling evil-hearted and thought that there were enough people in the world already. After the bones fell apart, the woman put them in a pot and buried them, marking a place with a stone. Thereafter, people continued doing this. Today, our picking up of the bones is equivalent to the wife's using her bleeding finger to find her husband's bones. We pick up the bones in order to let the dead live again.

Feuchtwang's version

A man, only three days after marrying, was called to do military service and was killed on duty at the Great Wall of China. His soul visited his wife in a dream, begging her to come and find his bones to bury them properly. But when she came to the Wall there were so many bones she did not know how to identify her husband's. An old man with a white beard, Tudi Gong, advised her that if she cut her finger and let blood drip from it the bones at which it would stop dripping would be those of her husband. (Another version of this story has it that the bones which would absorb her tears of mourning would be her husband's.) In this way she found and collected her husband's bones together in her skirts and carried them home weeping. She wept so profusely on to the bones that they began to come to life again. But Tudi Gong considered it unjust that her husband should be singled out from the other soldiers to be brought back to life. When the wife had to go and find food to eat he offered to guard the reviving bones for her.

On her return she found that they had lost their life again. She was very angry, and that is why there is a stone for Tudi Gong beside every grave. To keep the dead dead.

Funerals. During a funeral I attended in *Jiji* 集集, near *Shuili* in *Nantou* county, on July 2nd, 1995, the part of *Tudi Gong* was dramatised by Mr. *Xiao* 蕭, a Taoist priest friend of mine (see P74, 181). He explained to me that *Tudi Gong* plays an important role in funerals as the deity who 'guides' (帶路) the soul of the deceased to the next life.

The elaborate and detailed funerary ritual was performed by a troupe of seven Taoist priests, the *Sanqing Gong* 三清宮 of *Nantou* county. The ritual started at one o'clock in the afternoon, after the Taoist priests had spent several hours preparing a temporary structure, the sacred area or altar where Taoist services are conducted (Schipper 1989: 128). This was just outside the house of the deceased and close to the Mourning Chapel. Schipper writes that,

the first part of the service, which consists of the Retreat proper, is mainly performed in the sacred area, whereas the second part, which involves rites for the redemption and purification of the soul (lien-tu), takes place in the place before the Mourning Chapel. It is in this second part that the Mu-lien plays occur, especially at the very end. A saying common to Taoist masters when summing up the program of a funeral service is: 'First merit, then theatre' (kung-te t'ou, tso-hsi wei). Another possible translation is: 'First merit, then fun' (Schipper 1989: 129).

It was, in fact, with the representation of *Mulian* 目連¹⁰ towards the end of the ritual that *Tudi Gong* appeared on the scene. In his Taoist priest robe and wearing a mask representing *Tudi Gong*, Mr. *Xiao* had already informed the other priests that he would perform the scene of *Tudi Gong* making it last longer than usual to let me take some pictures and follow the sequence of his performance. After *Mulian* had spoken to the family, it was the turn of *Tudi Gong*. A Taoist priest promptly told me, **'you see, now *Tudi Gong* is entertaining the family of the deceased, giving them some advice and telling them some jokes.'** Making people laugh for a while seems to be an essential element of the ending part of the ritual. Reporting the answer of a Taoist master on making fun during funerary ritual, Schipper writes that, **'after the great sadness of the mourning and the funeral service, laughter is a necessary transition to ordinary life'** (Schipper 1989: 145).

Tudi Gong also helps *Mulian*, who is trying to rescue his mother from the underworld, when He *'comes to a fork in the road and does not know which way to go. Fortunately, the Earth God (T'u-ti Gong) comes along to show him the way'* (Ch'iu 1989: 115). The 'crossing of the bridge' was also very suggestive. The family of the deceased, guided by the *Yinlu Wang* 引路王, would cross the bridge several times, each time throwing 10 NT (New Taiwanese

¹⁰ The sequence of a funerary performance as well as the role played by the *Mulian* in rescuing his mother are very complicated and a complete presentation of them goes beyond the aim of my thesis. For a detailed exposition of the role of *Mulian* in Chinese popular culture and in Chinese funerary rituals the reader can refer to Johnson (1989; 1995: 55-103).

Dollars) in the river, represented by a tray with some water in it. After all the family members had given the 10 NTD toll, the *Yinlu Wang* had a quick word with *Tudi Gong*: they agreed that the soul of the deceased could definitely cross the bridge. This time it is *Tudi Gong* himself who would guide the soul to cross the bridge to the other world.

Connection with Chenghuang, Dazhong Ye and Youying Gong. The ethnographic data I collected in *Datong* district show that there seems to be a hierarchical connection between *Chenghuang*, *Tudi Gong*, *Dazhong Ye* and *Youying Gong*. I would suggest that this connection is noticeable in *Datong* district in the location and configuration of the temples belonging to them, through some religious practices associated with them and in the popular religious imagination of several of my raconteurs. Often, in fact, it was pointed out to me that such a hierarchical relationship is imagined spatially: references were made to the fascinating parallel between deities' spatial and hierarchical differentiation - and, thus, creation of nested and overlapping territories they take care of - and the way people, conjecturally, imagine their place as an ensemble of multilevelled and hierarchical territories and localities, in this life as well as in the afterlife.

When examining the locations of the temples belonging to the above deities, I was intrigued by the fact that facets of the Chinese religious pantheon in the place of Taiwan were almost inscribed in a specific territory such as that of the district, thus shedding some light on the way the above deities' hierarchical connection is constructed and portrayed. In addition, religious rituals such as 'processions' (遶境) and especially the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* 放軍 - 收軍 ritual would further substantiate the spatiality of religion in the place of Taiwan, with reference to *Chenghuang*, *Tudi Gong*, *Dazhong Ye* and *Youying Gong*.

Starting from the bottom up, in this part I will attempt to investigate the relationship between *Tudi Gong*, *Dazhong Ye* and *Youying Gong*. In part 4.3 I will present the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual in *Datong* district which, I feel, will emphasize and somehow clarify the relationship between *Chenghuang* and *Tudi Gong*.

It is not my intention to engage in a detailed examination of *Dazhong Ye* and *Youying Gong* nor on the role of *ghosts* in Chinese religious imagination. Several scholars have already studied the subject to a certain extent.¹¹ Here, suffice it to say that *ghosts* are imagined as 'homeless', 'wondering', 'placeless', and thus, dangerous.¹² The function of *Dazhong Ye* and *Youying Gong* is that of giving a fixed reference point to these wandering spirits where people can worship them regularly, thus reducing their dangerous powers.

¹¹ See, for example, Lin Fu-Shi (1996), Huang Wen-Bo (1991), Zai Wen-Feng (1996), Lai Zong-Bao (1986), Xing Zhou (1960) and Thompson, L. G. (1975) among others.

¹² Not all *ghosts*, however, are considered dangerous. Some are just pitiable.

In *Datong* district there seems to be no temple dedicated to *Dazhong Ye* 大眾爺. The closest one I have found is in *Wanhua* district (*Xichang* street 西昌街, no. 245-1), attached to a *Dizang Wang* temple 地藏王廟.

Lin Jin-Yuan (1994: 398) points out that *Dazhong Ye*, although it belongs to the *Youying Gong* category, is superior to *Youying Gong* - or *Baixing Gong* 百姓公, or *Zaxing Gong* 雜姓公¹³ - and the bones of the dead he takes care of are more numerous. The *Dazhong Ye* procession I attended on May 28th, 1995 in *Xinzhuang* city 新莊市 (*Taipei* county) at the *Dizang An* 地藏庵¹⁴ on *Zhongzheng* road 中正路, no. 80,¹⁵ was felt, by several people whom I asked, to be representative of the city of *Xinzhuang*.

Huang Wen-Bo (1991), in a cleverly orchestrated study of *Youying Gong* in contemporary Taiwan, introduces thirteen facets of the cult. The most common refers to the bones of the dead without name or descendants, and of tombs and cemeteries which have been excavated or demolished for development plans. There are, then, *Youying Gong* temples dedicated to those who have died by drowning or during wars, those who have committed suicide, have died while building roads or as a consequence of car accidents. Temples are dedicated also to children, women and foreigners.

In 1986, Huang Wen-Bo continues, several *Youying Gong* temples were established by gamblers: *Youying Gong*, as *Tudi Gong*, was believed to be able to give numbers to be played in lotteries. This is the reason for the name with which *Youying Gong* is addressed in such cases: *Facai Youying Gong* 發財有應公.¹⁶ Finally there are temples dedicated to cows, dogs, cats and pigs and to those more 'indistinct' (縹緲有應公) ghosts which are often addressed as *Good Brothers* (好兄弟仔).

In *Datong* district, I managed to locate nine temples or altars dedicated to *Youying Gong*. Seven of them are inside or attached to *Tudi Gong* temples, the other two seem to stand independently. Usually, the four characters 有求必應 (if you have a favour to ask, it will be granted) indicate the presence of *Youying Gong*.

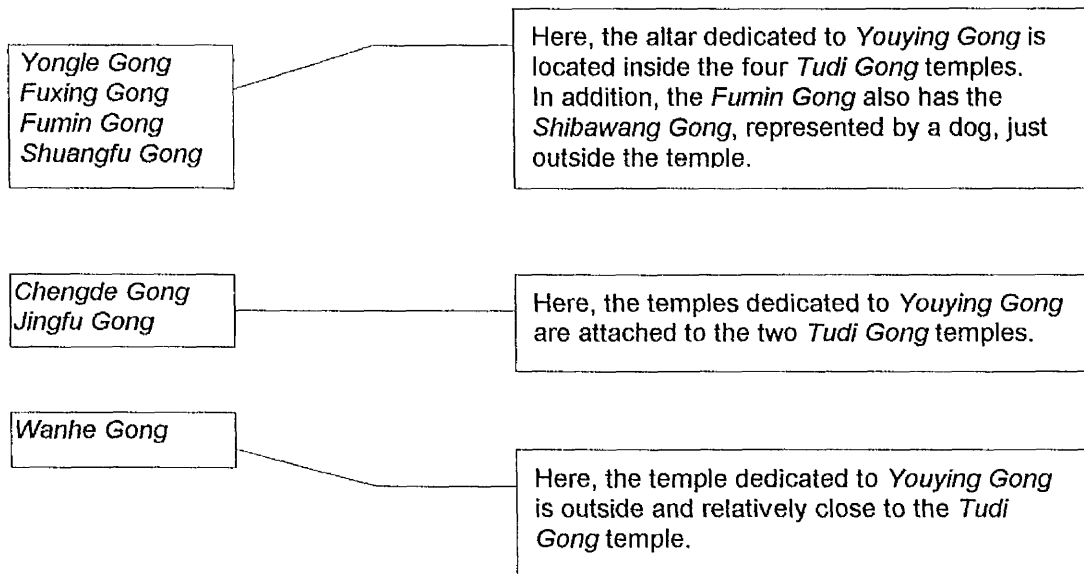
¹³ *Youying Gong* is the general term which is normally used. In different localities, however, this may be addressed as *Baixing Gong* (as in *Nantou xian*, *Shulli xiang*, *Yongxing* village), *Xinxing Gong* (in several areas of *Taipei*), *Zaxing Gong*, *Wanying Gong*, *Wanshan Gong*, *Damu Gong*, *Shenggong Ma*, etc.

¹⁴ It has to be noted that here, as in *Wanhua* district (*Taipei* city), *Dazhong Ye* is located in a temple whose main deity is *Dizang Wang*, whose 'birthday' festival is usually celebrated on the last day of the seventh lunar month, the *Ghost Month*, the day in which the *Ghosts Doors* are closed. A temple called *Xinxing Gong* 新興宮, dedicated to *Dizang Wang*, is also located in the eastern part of *Datong* district, at the intersection between *Changji* street 昌吉街 and *Datong* street 大同街.

¹⁵ As there seems not to be any number for the temple, no. 80 refers to a shop which is a general store, located on the *Zhongzheng* road. Following the signs, a small path leads one to the main entrance of the temple.

¹⁶ 發財 *facai* means 'to become rich.'

Young people, especially, would often associate these four characters with *Tudi Gong* and not with *Youying Gong*. This confusion, it was pointed out to me, tells us of some kind of association in contemporary Taiwan of *Youying Gong* temples with those dedicated to *Tudi Gong*. The following are the six *Tudi Gong* temples, located in the district, which are spatially connected to *Youying Gong*:



FT7. *Tudi Gong* temples in Datong district spatially connected to *Youying Gong* temples

The other two *Youying Gong* temples: the *Sheng Gong Ma* 聖公媽, located on *Dihua* street 迪化街, sect. 2, no. 147, and the *Penglai* temple 蓬萊廟,¹⁷ located on *Lanzhou* street 蘭州街, no. 29, do not appear to be connected with any *Tudi Gong* temple, although inside both of them statues of *Tudi Gong* are displayed.

Examining the position of *Youying Gong* temples or altars in *Datong* district with some Taiwanese friends, several interesting insights started to emerge. These appeared to help our understanding of the relationship between *Youying Gong*, *Tudi Gong* and the place in which are located. Although my friends were quite sure about the results of our 'speculations', I feel that the following considerations are still at the stage of an attempt which will need further research and clarifications.

¹⁷ Here the *Youying Gong* is called 新興公 *Xinxing Gong*, as it is in the *Fumin Gong*.

The first consideration we made regarded the fact that seven out of nine *Youying Gongs* are sited inside or attached to *Tudi Gong* temples. In addition, looking at the map of the area that the Japanese made in 1895, three months after their arrival in Taiwan, we detected that these *Tudi Gong* temples are somehow located at the margins or at the frontiers of the settlements in existence at that time: *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong*.

The map also quite clearly points out the spots which were used as cemeteries. These were relatively close to the localities in which, today, the seven *Tudi Gong* temples accommodate the *Youying Gongs*.

On the map there seems not to be any mention of a cemetery in the northern locality *Dalongtong*. The fact, however, that there the *Youying Gong* is close to the *Wanhe Gong*, a *wai* (outside) *Tudi Gong* temple which used to take special care of the area outside the settlement, made us wonder whether tombs might also have been located in the area of *Dalongtong*. Although plausible, this still remains a speculation.

The development and restructuring of the locality started by the Japanese at the beginning of the 20th century caused a demolishing of the cemeteries especially those located in the southern and eastern part of *Dadaocheng*. Most possibly, the bones of the dead were moved to a location where they would continue to rest in peace. *Tudi Gong* temples in the vicinity were indeed the most convenient and secure sites for several reasons.

The convenience of a close location would allow the bones of the dead to remain, or at least to be remembered and worshipped in the locality. The attachment that the Chinese have towards their place is felt in this life, but is also imagined and 'talked about' for the afterlife. I have often heard elderly people expressing an intense desire to be buried on the land of their place of origin. The land of their ancestors is a representation of stability and continuity - which they have presumably not experienced in this life - and it is imagined as the right location for their own burial and location in the afterlife. Furthermore, the cult of the ancestors has played an important role in the Chinese sense of continuity between the land, family and community, thus creating a specific Chinese 'place-bound' identity.

Previously, I have already stressed that one of *Tudi Gong's* functions involves 'controlling the ghosts.' By placing *Youying Gong* in *Tudi Gong* temples or annexes, local inhabitants can feel assured against the possibly dangerous or malignant power of ghosts, especially those whose name is not known or have died without descendants. Locally, these would be propitiated by people worshipping at the *Tudi Gong* temple where the *Youying Gong* is also sited.

The case of *Youying Gong* in *Datong* district seems also to highlight, as a friend put it, '***Tudi Gong's function of the social managing of the bones of the dead through his temples in a specific and circumscribed place such as that of the district you are studying.***' Such a function would also further substantiate the characteristic of *Tudi Gong* as the deity of both the *Yin* and *Yang* worlds and His higher position in the Chinese religious pantheon with reference to *Youying Gong*.

Association with gambling and prostitution. Towards the end of 1985, Taiwan was swept by the *Dajiale* 大家樂 gambling fever. *Gaoxiong* 高雄, the largest city in southern Taiwan, seems to have been the starting point, but in a few months the *Dajiale* activity expanded towards *Taizhong* and, eventually, throughout the whole island. It has been reported that during the first months of 1986 more than 300,000 Taiwanese had already participated in such a gambling activity (Fu Zhi-Ying 1986: 48).

The *Dajiale* was an 'underground' re-appropriation of the Patriotic Lottery 愛國獎券 which would allow gamblers to win 'faster' and 'bigger amounts of money.' For a detailed presentation and discussion of the *Dajiale* activity, the reader can refer to a variety of articles in newspapers and magazines which were published at that time.¹⁸

Even sociologists and psychologists have attempted to interpret this activity in the context of social change occurring in Taiwanese society.¹⁹ The movement also worried the Government, not only for the illegality of the 'lottery,' but also for fear that some local politicians, I was told, **'would profit from large crowds assembling at specific *Dajiale* gambling sites on the island for their political campaigns and advantages.'**

Where were these *Dajiale* gambling sites to be found? It seems that some deities and their temples became part of the game from the very start of the *Dajiale* movement. The following story is indicative of what seems to have been the case for an overwhelming number of people, deities and places in those years.

In Taizhong, on Gang Road, there is a very small Tudi Gong temple which was infrequently attended by worshippers. Because of Dajiale, an unsuccessful businessman went there to worship.

He said, 'Tudi Gong, if you help me to become rich, I will come back here every day.' He then saw that a number appeared on the 'dish of sand' 沙盤 just in front of Tudi Gong. He played that number at the Dajiale lottery and he won.

The news spread quickly so that the small Tudi Gong temple become a very crowded Dajiale gambling site. After worshipping that particular Tudi Gong, people were hoping that the lucky number would appear on the dish of sand for them too.

*What was a very solitary place, became, quite suddenly, a small market selling everything from food to betel-nuts, from paper money to cigarettes and 'smelly bean-curd.'*²⁰

¹⁸ See Huang Han-Yao (1988), Lin Zhao-Zhen (1987), Huang Jing-Yang (1987), Xie Gao-Qiao (1986), Chi Zong-Xian (1986), Wu Wen-Xing (1988) and He Ming-Guo (1986) among others.

¹⁹ See, for example, Chen Wei-Xin (1988).

²⁰ The story is reported by Gao Jing-Fen, Chen Nian and You Jing-Min (1986: 19). The summary translation is mine.

These small *Tudi Gong* temples - not usually used as community worship temples - were not the only *Dajiale* gambling sites. *Dazhong Ye* and *Youying Gong* temples seem to have outnumbered *Tudi Gong* temples as the preferred sites for *Dajiale* gambling. In those years, numerous mutilated statues of *Tudi Gong* were thrown away all over Taiwan. It seems that he had failed to give the winning numbers. Although the *Dajiale* seems to have been prohibited by the authorities, on several occasions during my fieldwork in Taiwan (1994-95) I noticed the dish of sand in a good number of small *Tudi Gong* temples especially in the countryside and away from community centres. There were exceptions, however. In *Yongxing* village, my rural fieldwork site, the dish of sand was displayed both inside the *Lin Peng* temple, located in the village, and in the *Tudi Gong* temple located in the *Twelve Ancient Heroes* temple compound.

Tudi Gong temples located in red-light districts seem to be often visited by prostitutes working in the area. In a few cases, these temples would also exhibit the statue of *Zhuba Jie* 豬八戒, one of the main characters in '*Journey to the West*,' who was supposedly incarnated through the spirit of a pig, a symbol of man's cupidity. Prostitutes seem to pay special veneration to this character.

This second part has aimed at presenting to the reader the various 'territories' and the ways in which *Tudi Gong* operates in the Taiwanese practice of everyday life. The cult of *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan, in fact, seems to expand well beyond the establishment and configurations of the temples dedicated to Him, to embrace, as it has been shown above, a wide ranging set of locales and images with which He is often associated. This variegated 'positionality' (*multilocation*) of *Tudi Gong* is also generative of 'stories' (*multilocation*) through which people 'on the ground' continue to give sense to themselves and the places they inhabit.

The following part intends to be an exemplification of the relationship between *Chenghuang* and *Tudi Gong* as portrayed during the *Fang Jun* - *Shou Jun* ritual in *Datong* district. I will argue, in the final part, that the ethnographic data presented in this chapter give scope for a speculative discussion on 'Chinese' popular religion as a place-based phenomenon, or, as Faure stresses, as indicative of the 'Chinese' *locative* vision of the world (Faure 1987: 338).

P87
P88

Tudi Gong as Houtu in Yongxing village



P89

P89. Tudi Gong and Mulian during funerals

P90

P90. Tudi Gong 'guides' the soul of the deceased to the next life

P91

P91. The 'crossing of the bridge' during a funerary ritual

P92

P92. A Youying Gong temple in central Taiwan

P93

P93. The Youying Gong at the Jingfu temple, Datong district



P94

The Youying Gong at the Chengde temple, Datong district

P95



P96

The Youying Gong at the Wanhe temple, Datong district

P97



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P99

Sheng Gong Ma temple, Datong district

P100

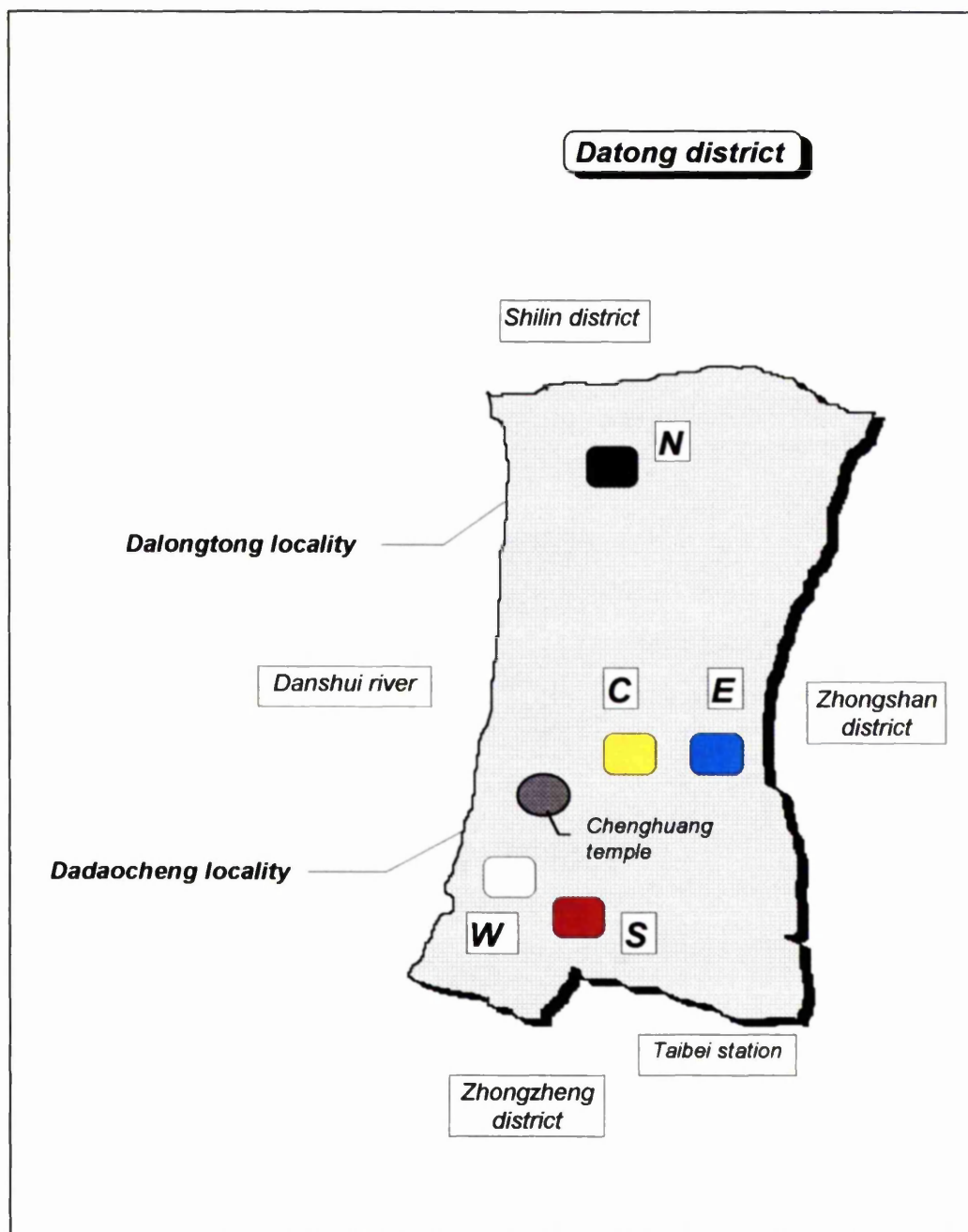
P100. The Shibawang Gong at the Fumin temple, Datong district

P101

P101. Zhuba Jie at a Tudi Gong temple in Zhongshan district, Taipei city

4.3 'Delimiting, guarding and purifying the territory':

the 放軍 - 收軍 *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual in Datong district, Taipei city



M18. Mapping the Fang Jun - Shou Jun ritual in Datong district, Taipei city

The map of *Datong* district on the previous page shows the position of the *Dadaocheng Xiahai Chenghuang* temple 大稻埕霞海城隍廟 and of five *Tudi Gong* temples, which are represented by the five colours. The *Fang Jun - Shou Jun*,²¹ which is constructed around these five *Tudi Gong* temples, is one of the rituals performed on the occasion of *Chenghuang*'s birthday. This occurs on the 13th day of the 5th lunar month and it is celebrated in *Datong* district with a two-week programme which includes various activities and rituals.²²

In 1995, 3rd June, the 6th day of the 5th lunar month, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, a ceremony called *Fang Jun An Wuying* 放軍安五營 took place in the district. ***'In the past, this was performed on the 10th day of the 5th lunar month, three days before the birthday of Chenghuang. However, a decade ago the date was changed to the 6th day of the 5th lunar month because of groups coming from the south of Taiwan to attend and perform the Bajia Jiang 八家將. The Shou Jun has always been performed on the 18th day of the 5th lunar month,'*** Mr. Chen Hua-Dun 陳華墩 explained. As it is today, therefore, the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual marks the beginning and end of *Chenghuang* birthday celebrations.

Eighty years old, Mr. Chen is from *Quanzhou Tongan* 泉州同安. He has taken care of the *Xiahai Chenghuang* temple for forty-five years. Although he still goes to the temple to help a few times a week, three years ago Mr. Chen invited Mrs. Chen Wen-Wen 陳文文 to take his place as temple manager.

'To perform the Fang Jun An Wuying ritual - Mr. Chen continued - we first need to invite a Taoist priest (道士) who then will invite Tudi Gong²³ to lead the way (帶路)... Tudi Gong is the deity guardian and protector of the place (地方守護神), He understands and knows the place and its roads better than anybody else. Tudi Gong, therefore, guides deities, generals and soldiers to the five Tudi Gong temples to Anying. In addition, from Fang Jun to Shou Jun there is a period of two weeks. In the several processions both during the day and at night Tudi Gong also has the function of guiding deities, generals and soldiers to arrest bad and evil people.'

The *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual performed in connection with *Xiahai Dadaocheng Chenghuang* temple has a long history in the district. During the last forty-eight years in which the Chen family has taken care of the temple, every year the ritual has always been carried

²¹ The *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* or *Fang Bing - Shou Bing* ritual is translated by Wang Ming-Ming (1995: 57) as 'sending the guards to stand sentry' and 'calling back the guards.' The ritual has been referred to as 'a typical example of Taoist belief' (Xu Xue-Ji 1992:27; Xu Yu-Jian 1993:75).

²² For further information regarding the *Dadaocheng Xiahai Chenghuang Miao*, the reader can refer to Feuchtwang (1987), Xie Jia-Rong (1987), Xu Bi-Kui (1987), Xu Xue-Ji (1992) and Xu Yu-Jian (1993).

²³ Mr. Chen also pointed out that formerly the Taoist priest would invite the *Tudi Gong* located in the *Chenghuang* temple to 'lead the way.' Afterwards, the leading *Tudi Gong* was invited directly by a *Ganshe* 幹社 (local associations). Sometimes the *dailu Tudi Gong* 帶路土地公 would be sited for a while in the *Chenghuang* temple. In 1995, the *Shuanglian She* 雙連社 played the leading role during *Chenghuang* celebrations and the *dailu Tudi Gong* was that of the *Shuangfu* temple.

out. Mrs. Chen Wen-Wen explained that, **'the Fang Jun - Shou Jun ritual, together with all the other celebrations for Chenghuang, were all performed before our family took charge of the temple.'** Mr. Chen Hua-Dun went further and suggested that, **'all the rituals performed in the Xiahai Chenghuang temple, including the Fang Jun - Shou Jun ritual, are all from Quanzhou.'**

During the *Fang Jun An Wuying* ritual, five small paper-made houses or barracks about one meter high, are sited inside the five *Tudi Gong* temples. The colours of the five barracks (Blu/Green, Red, White, Black and Yellow) represent the five directions (East, South, West, North and Centre). The choice of these five *Tudi Gong* temples located in the five directions has been dictated by the geographical position of the *Chenghuang* temple, which is 'sited on the West and faces the East' (坐東朝西), as the central point in the configuration of the place.

The question which arises here is that of clarifying, if possible, which place we are referring to. Is it *Datong district* as an administrative unit or the old localities *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong*?

A first look at the position of the five *Tudi Gong* temple may suggest that the place we are referring to is *Datong* district as an administrative unit. The five temples, in fact, seem to embrace the whole administrative territory of the district as it is today.

A closer examination, however, seems to indicate otherwise. In the first chapter of this thesis I have already pointed out that in 1990 *Taipei* city districts were restructured: the former *Yanping* district and *Jianzheng* district were included in *Datong* district's administrative boundaries. Before 1990, the five *Tudi Gong* temples in which the ritual would be carried out were the same as those we have today. They were located in three administrative units: *Datong*, *Yanping* and *Jianzheng* districts.

This seems to indicate that the place we are referring to is not an administrative unit but the two old localities *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong*. The position of the five *Tudi Gong* temples which take part in the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual, in fact, are somehow located at the boundaries of these two old localities.

This view is supported by the connection, which was pointed out to me, between the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual with the *Anfang* 暗訪 processions. It seems that 'delimitation of community boundaries' and 'purification of the territory' are the two main functions of both rituals. The *Anfang* processions usually take place during the two evenings (11th and 12th days of the 5th lunar month) before the procession of *Chenghuang* (13th day of the 5th lunar month). There is a suggestive, almost secretive and fearful, atmosphere attached to these rituals, **'bad people are discovered and arrested at night,'** I was told. The route of the *Anfang* processions, which is presented on the following page, also seems to show that the boundaries refer more to the old settlements *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong* than to the actual *Datong* district as an administrative unit.

M19. The route of the Anfang processions in Datong district, Taipei city
(Kindly provided by Mrs. Chen Wen-Wen, Xiahai Chenghuang temple)



Before further introducing the ritual, I would like to present the locations of the five *Tudi Gong* temples and the colours, numbers, generals and soldiers associated with them. Regarding the colours, Werner pointed out that, 'the *T'u Ti* are divided into five families of protecting spirits: the Green *T'u Ti* of the Eastern circuit, the Red of the Southern, the White of the Western, the Black of the Northern, and the Yellow of the Centre' (Werner 1961: 528), thus clearly connecting territories, directions, colours and *Tudi Gongs*:



The Blu/Green colour refers to the East and it is associated with the *Shuangfu* temple, located on *Shuanglian* Street, no. 37. General *Zhang* 張 guides 99.000 *Yi* 夷 soldiers, 9000 of whom are on horses and 90.000 on foot. The number connected with this site is 9.



The Red colour refers to the South and it is associated with the *Fuju* temple, located on *Yanping* North Road, sect. 1, no. 68. General *Xiao* 蕭 guides 88.000 *Man* 蠻 soldiers, 8000 of whom are on horses and 80.000 on foot. The number connected with this site is 8.



The White colour refers to the West and it is associated with the *Hede* temple, located on *Ganu* Street, no. 42. General *Liu* 劉 guides the *Rong* 戎 soldiers, 6000 of whom are on horses and 60.000 on foot. The number connected with this site is 6.



The Black colour refers to the North and it is associated with the *Wanhe* temple, located on *Dihua* Street, sect. 2, no. 304. General *Lian* 連 guides 55.000 *Di* 狄 soldiers, 5000 of whom are on horses and 50.000 on foot. The number connected with this site is 5.



The Yellow colour refers to the Centre and it is associated with the *Puyuan* temple, located on *Guisui* Street, no. 64-9. General *Li* 李 guides 33.000 *Qin* 秦 soldiers, 3000 of whom are on horses and 30.000 on foot. The number connected with this site is 3.

The above is the association between the five *Tudi Gong* temples and their respective generals and soldiers that Xu Xue-Ji (1992: 27) reports with regard to the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual on occasion of *Chenghuang* celebration in *Datong* district.²⁴ The four groups of military located in the East, South, West and North are the *Yi*, the *Man*, the *Rong* and the *Di* who were the four 'barbarian' tribes at the four frontiers of the Middle Kingdom in ancient China. The central seat is occupied by the Chinese *Qin* and its general, who is surnamed *Li*, seems to refer to *Santaizi* 三太子 or *Nazhataizi* 哪吒太子 (Liu Hai-Yue 1994: 96; Li Feng-Mao 1994: 457).

²⁴ Liu Hai-Yue (1994: 76, vol. 40) introduces the complete name of each general and their respective 'army heads' (兵頭).

Liu Hai-Yue (1994: 76, vol. 40) points out that the *Wu Ying* is divided into *nei* 內 (inside) *Wu Ying* and *wai* 外 (outside) *Wu Ying*. Because of lack of space especially in the city, the *nei Wu Ying* is arranged inside temples.

Here, I have often seen the 'five *Ying* heads' (五營頭) placed on an altar dedicated to the *Wu Ying*. Associated with the five *Ying* heads, or sometimes exhibited on their own, I have also noticed the 'five *Ying* flags' (五營旗). The colours of both the heads and the flags represent the traditional Chinese conception of associating the *five fang* with the five colours I have introduced above.

The *wai Wu Ying*, I was told, can be arranged in five locations outside the temple. These locations would be chosen according to geomantic principles and would somehow reflect the boundaries of the temple territory, or, as often is the case in the countryside, the boundaries of a specific community. The five *locations* would be marked by inserting branches in the ground, with a red cloth attached to them. Where possible, *Tudi Gong* temples could be chosen to mark the five locations, such as in the case of *Chenghuang* temple in *Datong* district.

The *Wu Ying* ritual is especially performed and attached to the popular belief in *Wang Ye* 王爺. However, *Chenghuang*, since his cult is more ancient and his position hierarchically higher than *Wang Ye*, takes precedence in those places where his temples are sited.²⁵ In *Datong* district, for example, *Chenghuang* takes precedence also over *Baosheng Dadi*, *Mazu* and *Fazhu Gong*.

The case of *Datong* district also seems to show that the choice of five *Tudi Gong* temples as *Chenghuang* strategic points and the fact that the two deities' functions, though similar, are mainly differentiated by the size of their protected territory, reflect the hierarchical connection between *Chenghuang* and *Tudi Gong* to a considerable degree. Several times, some of my raconteurs, would refer to *Chenghuang* as the *laoban* 老闆, the boss in charge of a specific territory, while the various *Tudi Gongs* as *His buxia* 部下, subordinates who would take care of smaller territorial units.

Chenghuang would also be thought of as 'provincial governor' (省長), 'county magistrate' (縣長), 'city mayor' (市長) or 'district mayor' (區長) while *Tudi Gong* as 'head of a subdivision of a district' (里長) or 'head of a neighbourhood' (鄰長). Spatial conceptions and territoriality, therefore, appear to be a recurrent theme in defining functions of and connections between *Chenghuang* and *Tudi Gong*. In addition, one should point out the folk religious conception that as *Tudi Gong* operates in both the *Yin* and *Yang* worlds, so also does *Chenghuang* (Hong Xiao 1981).

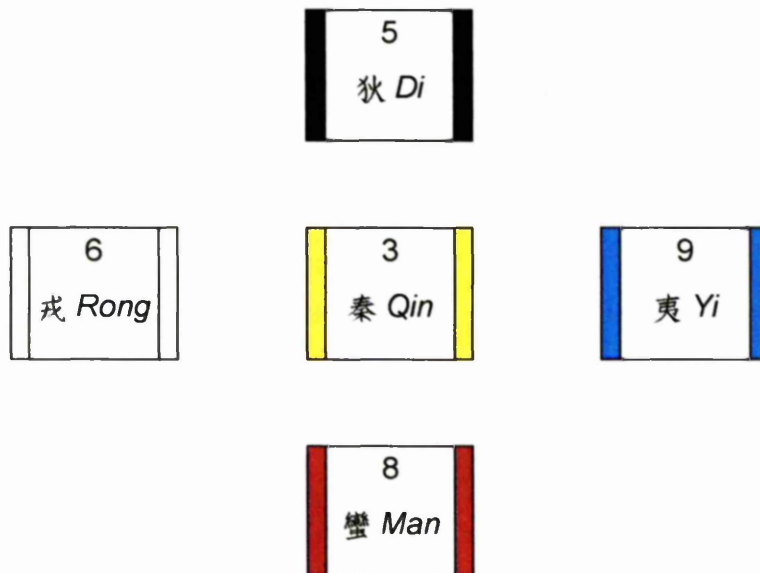
²⁵ Personal communication with Prof. Li Feng-Mao, 2nd January 1997, Muzha, *Taipei*.

Regarding the origin of the *Wu Ying*, Li Feng-Mao stresses that the ritual is based on a Chinese spatial conception which is presented in the *Dong Yuan Shen Zhou Jing* 洞淵神咒經, an ancient Taoist book. Such a spatial conception seems to have been enriched subsequently by popular belief and practice.

In the Taoist book, the formulation of this conception is very basic. Questions still remain on whether it was first developed as a four-site conception which comprises the eastern, southern, western and northern army and afterwards the central one or vice versa. As already presented, each site is associated with specific numbers:

東營九夷軍，九千九萬將，九千軍馬九萬人
 南營八蠻軍，八千八萬將，八千軍馬八萬人
 西營六戎軍，六千六萬將，六千軍馬六萬人
 北營五狄軍，五千五萬將，五千軍馬五萬人
 中營三秦軍，三千三萬將，三千軍馬三萬人

Wearing the helmet, the armour and holding the treasured sword, the soldiers are ready for war. Under each army banner, they draw up for battle. The reciprocal intermingling of odd and even numbers



sets in motion the reciprocal production of the *Yin* and *Yang* and thus the *Tian Luo Di Wang* 天羅地網 is achieved (Li Feng-Mao 1994: 456-57). In other words, it can be said that the 'tactical

deployment of troops' (陣) in the district generates a spatial network which metaphorically allows, through ritual processions, the envelopment and catching of 'criminals' and of all those malignant forces at work on the territory. At the same time, the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual also has the scope of delimiting and guarding the territory of a specific community which, despite the recent administrative changes in the district, still refers to the two old localities *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong*.

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***The Fang Jun - Shou Jun ritual and Anfang processions
in Datong district, Taipei city,
June 1995***



P102. Chenghuang at the Xiahai Chenghuang temple in Datong district

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Shuangfu temple: East

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P106

Fuju temple: South

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Hede temple: West



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P110

Wanhe temple: North

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Puyuan temple: Centre



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Anfang processions



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Shou Jun

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4.4 Discussion.

This chapter has explored various *topoi* of Taiwanese everyday life to which *Tudi Gong* is particularly connected. By employing the complementary opposition between *Yin* and *Yang*, I have suggested that the different connections and sites in which *Tudi Gong* operates may be located on this well recognized dual Chinese view. *Tudi Gong* may be regarded, I argue, as the spirit who, more consistently than any other Chinese deity, exemplifies His mediatory functions in the ongoing interplay of the *Yin* and *Yang* worlds. As an indigenous category of classification, the *Yin* and *Yang* view²⁶ has, I feel, allowed one to build a picture, as complete as possible, of the cult of *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan as well as indicate the multifarious Taiwanese attachments and senses of *Tudi Gong*.

In the third part, the presentation of a rarely mentioned ritual,²⁷ which is performed yearly in *Datong* district, has highlighted the connection between *Chenghuang* and *Tudi Gong* and the extent to which popular views about 'Chinese' religion may be, I wish to indicate, inscribed spatially in a defined territory such as that of the district.²⁸ The spatial configuration, network and re-generation which are produced by the performance of this ritual may be seen, I suggest, as a theatrical territorial representation of the Five Elements view (五行) which, with that of the *Yin* and *Yang*, constitute the basic principles, both in theory and practice, characterizing Chinese religion (Saso 1972: 8).²⁹ The reader can associate the following chart (Saso 1972: 13), which Saso built on De Groot's sophisticated explanation of the *Yin-Yang* and Five elements/phases views, to the *Fang Jun* - *Shou Jun* ritual presented above.

²⁶ The reader may refer to Saso (1972: 8-31), Schipper (1994: 32-43), Sangren (1987: 132-40) and Feuchtwang (1991: 155-6).

²⁷ Scholars who have very briefly presented the *Fang Jun* - *Shou Jun* ritual are: Li Feng-Mao (1994: 454-57), Liu Hai-Yue (1994: 76-83), Yang Tian-Hou & Lin Li-Kuan (1996: 163-66), Xu Xue-Ji (1992: 27), Xu Yu-Jian (1993: 75), Jiang Yi-Zhen (1995: 79-80) - and Wang Ming-Ming (1995), who writes about the *Fang Jun* - *Shou Jun* in *Quanzhou, Fujian*.

²⁸ I am deeply grateful to Prof. Li Feng-Mao for having clarified various questions on the ritual as well as given precious insights on several topics of my thesis. Besides, his encouragement on pursuing my line of investigation has been very much appreciated. Special thanks also to Mr. Chen Hua-Dun, Mrs. Chen Wen-Wen, Ms. Tang Xin-Tian, Ms. Li Zhen-Hui and Prof. Luo Zheng-Xin. Their time and help have indeed contributed to my understanding of the *Fang Jun* - *Shou Jun* ritual.

²⁹ Saso wrote that 'the principles from which Taoism derives, descending from the *Yin-Yang* five-element school of ancient Chinese philosophy, are the same basic principles that guide the Chinese religion. The plausibility of this hypothesis may be established by two sets of demonstrative materials. The first is based upon classical texts explaining the principles of the *Yin-Yang* five element school; the second is of factual events showing that the rites and festivals of the popular religion are, in fact, based upon the principles of the *Yin*, *Yang*, and the five elements' (Saso 1972: 8). Saso, then, expands his view by revisiting the Chinese annual religious cycle and highlighting the degree to which the *Yin*, *Yang* and five elements views are inscribed in the practice of Chinese popular religion.

<i>Benevolence</i>	<i>Righteousness</i>	<i>Propriety</i>	<i>Wisdom</i>	<i>Faith</i>
Liver	Lungs	Heart	Kidneys	Spleen
Wood	Metal	Fire	Water	Earth
East	West	South	North	Center
Blue	White	Red	Black	Yellow
Eyes	Nose	Ears	Tubes	Mouth
Dragon	Tiger	Red bird	Tortoise	Crucible

FT8. Saso's chart built on de Groot's explanation of the Yin-Yang and Five elements/phases views

Source: Saso (1972:13)

Spatial directions, bodily divisions, colours, animals are also coupled with the temporal division of the seasons (Schipper 1994: 35):

Spring	Autumn	Summer	Winter	The third lunar month of each - there are 12 lunar months to a year - falls under the sign of the earth, the intermediary and central phase.
--------	--------	--------	--------	--

Schipper continues by pointing out that '*here, the Earth is the Center, whereas the four other phases correspond to the Four Winds*' (Schipper 1994: 35).

The *Yin-Yang* and *Five Elements/Phases* principles have, I feel, suggested a possible perspective from which to present and examine the cult of *Tudi Gong* and the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual in contemporary Taiwan. The practice of Chinese popular religion (Weller's pragmatic approach, 1987) seems to be embedded in such principles (Weller's ideologized approach, 1987) to the extent that, one may say, representations of the supernatural and performance of rituals are informed by such views (Saso 1972: 8-31; Feuchtwang 1991: 155-6).

The *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual in *Datong* district has, I must admit, intrigued me to a considerable degree. I have often wondered whether the spatial construction of place engendered by the contemporary performance of the ritual may be connected to past 'Chinese' conceptions of space and arrangements of place. In a speculative manner, I intend to indicate briefly three ways to answer my question by referring to the studies of Lefeuve (1990; 1993; 1996), Smith (1996) and Wang Ming-Ming (1995). However, my aim is merely that of highlighting to the reader potential trajectories which, in my future work, may shed more light on the historical development of the cult of *Tudi Gong*, a feature which has not been explored in the present thesis, and on those rituals associated with it.

In three well documented articles, Lefeuve attempts to associate the grassroots cult of *Tudi Gong* to the ancient Chinese conception of ancestors and land. The main theme that he points out from a meticulous study of oracle and bronze inscriptions is that, during the *Shang* period, *Di* 帝 was considered as the 'Great Ancestor' who governed the universe and gave life to people and land.

Below Di, but above the other spirits, there were the four Fang (方) the spirits of the four Regions. It seems that they help Di to control the Land, being in charge of one fourth of it. What is interesting to note is the fact that each of them has a personal name, an indication that, like Di, they are ancestor-like spirits' (Lefeuve 1993: 4).

These Four Fangs ('grands territoires,' see Lefeuve 1996), which were associated with the four directions and winds, embraced smaller territories ('petits territoires') often of foreign 'tribes belonging to the Shang or being friendly to them' (Lefeuve 1993: 4). This last point leads me to speculate on the extent to which the five-way territorial division presented in the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual and the representation and assimilation of four 'barbarian' tribes located at the four cardinal points may refer to, or be speculatively associated with, the 'tributary system' employed in China. Smith (1996: 13) writes that,

central to China's self image as well as its strategic vision was the so-called tributary system, which the Chinese considered to be an extension of the assumed political and social order of the early Zhou dynasty (c. 1100-256 BC). Outlined in classical works such as the Yili (Etiquette and Ritual), established during the Han dynasty, and highly developed by later imperial times, it rested on the assumption of a hierarchical structure of foreign relations, with China at both the top and centre.

This system represented the ritualized affirmation of China's cultural hegemony over all other peoples. In this sense, the Middle Kingdom was, symbolically at least, an 'empire without neighbours.' Although never entirely successful, the Chinese tried whenever possible to assimilate their foreign relations to 'domestic' structures of power and authority.³⁰

The spatial self representation of China as the 'Middle Kingdom,' one may suggest, may have been ritualized to portray the dominant role that it wished to play.

³⁰ To note that the tributary system, 'in addition to reinforcing Chinese cultural pretensions, provided an effective means of intelligence-gathering' (Smith 1996: 14) both internally and externally.

As Schipper suggests, the central ground is associated with the earth which '*represents a fifth element that makes possible the joining of the preceding four*' (Schipper 1994: 35), which might also answer Li Feng-Mao's question on whether the spatial configuration of the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual has first developed as a four-site conception and, later, a fifth site, the central one, has been added (see part 4.3). The argument discussed so far seem to suggest that a fifth site may have been added in a time in which China extended, or wished to extend, its structure of power and authority both internally and externally.

Turning back to Lefevre's argument, the worship of the Four Fangs was also associated with that of the 'Spirit of the Soil' (土) which

was not without connection with the worship of the four Regions... Sometimes the spirit of the river, the spirit of mountain, and another identified by Tsai Zhe-Mao as the spirit of the Cereals, were worshipped with the spirit of the soil...

During the Chou dynasty, the spirit of the Soil Tu became Shi. In some cases it was worshipped with the Fang... But most of the time Shi was associated with Ji, the spirit of the Cereals. (Lefevre 1993: 4-5).

A consistent change happened from the *Han* dynasty:

the worship of the spirit of the Soil was performed by the emperor and the local officials unto the level of the zhou-zhang. Below that level the worship was the responsibility of the local people.

It is extremely interesting to see that the Chinese were faithful to their roots: the worship of the spirit of the Soil remained the worship of an ancestor. On the official level, with a short interruption under the Ming, the protection of the soil was entrusted, by imperial decree, to the mythical ancestor Gou Long. For the local people this protector is Tudi Ye or Tudi Gong, an ancestor full of benevolence. (Lefevre 1993: 5).

It is also in this period that the association of five colours with the five *Tudi*,³¹ as presented in the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual, started to be employed, thus indicating that '*at the beginning of the Han dynasty, below the Spirit of the Soil for the whole earth, there were different spirits for the four quarters of the universe*' (Lefevre 1990: 4).

This may also suggest, I incline to view, that Chinese cosmological and spatial conceptions may have been re-elaborated through the various dynasties. They may have served, through

³¹ Lefevre (1990:4) quotes the *Han Shi Wai Zhuan* 韓詩外傳 by Han Ying 韓嬰.

rituals, as an endorsement of the hierarchical Chinese establishment or, through popular appropriation, as resistance to it.³²

In this vein, Wang Ming-Ming's (1995) sophisticated presentation of the *pujing* 鋪境 (wards or precincts)³³ shows how this 'integrated system of urban socio-spatial divisions' (Wang Ming-Ming 1995: 33) in the city of *Quanzhou* in southern *Fujian* was manipulated by local inhabitants into a 'spatial organization of territorial festivals' (Wang Ming-Ming 1995: 33). For a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the system, the reader may refer to Wang's article. Here, I only aim at introducing the *zhenjing* 鎮境 ritual which was performed³⁴ yearly in *Quanzhou* and which seems to have originated the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual still currently performed in *Datong* district. Wang writes that,

each year, a ritual called '*zhenjing*' or 'guarding the territory' was conducted in each *pu* and *jing*..., which reconfirmed the boundaries of the *pujing*. The ritual was performed in two phases: one part in the spring and the other in the winter. In the spring, a date was chosen by divination within the territorial temple for a ceremony which was known as '*fangbing*' (sending the guards to stand ⁵entry). On this day, all households within the same *pu* or *jing* placed offerings at the main entrances of their homes in order to placate the guards (*bing*) and generals (*jiang*). Near evening, an image of the *pu* or *jing* patron god was carried in a procession to survey the territory (*xunjing*). The route of the procession was the border line of the *jing* and *pu*. In the winter, the same series of ceremonies was repeated, though at this time were called '*shoubing*' (calling back the guards) (Wang Ming-Ming 1995: 57).

Wang's summary presentation of the ritual as performed in *Quanzhou* gives scope for a further repositioning of the ritual as performed in *Datong* district.

The *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual and the *Anfang* procession in *Datong* district were introduced, as Mr. Chen stressed (see part 4.3), by *Tongan* people from *Quanzhou* and, from the beginning, they have been connected with the *Xiahai Chenghuang* temple. I have also pointed

³² Lefevre's work, which has only been briefly addressed here, offers various interesting insights into the way space/place were configured in ancient China and their relationship with the current practice and view of the cult of *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan. In our frequent discussions, both Lefevre and myself have often expressed the wish to carry out further research on the subject. The merging of his 'ethnography of the past' and my 'ethnography of the present' will, hopefully, indicate more substantially the development of a cult which is still alive among the Chinese.

³³ Wang notes that 'this spatial institution was invented by the Ming dynasty's regional magistrates in 1370s. Its initial function were militia organization (*pubing zhi*) and information gathering; not long after its invention it came to be applied by the magistrates as an instrument of urban administrative control and a means of symbolizing the presence of imperial state structures in the locality. During the same period, local inhabitants under the rule of the imperial magistrates responded to the imposition of this spatial order through ceremonial appropriations and story-telling' (Wang Ming-Ming 1995: 33).

³⁴ The ritual, however, has 'enjoyed a partial revival in recent years' (Wang Ming-Ming 1995: 69).

out that these ritual activities have served as a symbolic way of delimiting, guarding and purifying the places/communities of the two old localities *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong*. Currently, they still refer to these localities.

In my view, it seems that the sense of and attachment to one's own place/community are continually re-created through these yearly rituals. Could these be felt by *Tongan* people as an act of re-membering their past settlements, as an imagined appropriation of and claim over one's own community and territory, notwithstanding the various administrative changes under the Japanese occupation and the Nationalist ruling government? It has to be noted, in fact, that *Tongan* is the 'place of origin' of the *Baoan Gong* in *Dalongtong* and the *Chenghuang Miao* and *Cisheng Gong* in *Dadaocheng* (Feuchtwang 1987).³⁵ The strong ties between temples and local communities is a further indication of the considerable degree to which the interrelation between place and identity can be felt and strengthened through these ritual activities.

In addition, it has to be stressed that in *Datong* district the association of the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual with both *Chenghuang* and *Tudi Gong* is rather unique. I was informed that in southern Taiwan it is generally linked with the cult of *Wang Ye*, an observation found also in Wang's article (1995).

The ethnographic data presented in this chapter and the various discussions in which I have engaged provide grounds for further historical and comparative research especially between the two sides of the Taiwan straits. They also contribute towards reinforcing what I would address as the place-based connotations and territoriality of Chinese popular religion. I feel, in fact, that the trajectories outlined in the discussion above are indicative, to us² Faure's words (1987: 338), of the Chinese 'locative' vision of the world which in the 'localized beliefs of popular religion as ritual practice' finds its most suitable application.³⁶

³⁵ These temples are respectively located in the northern, central and southern part of the current district and extend vertically through the two old localities.

³⁶ I wonder whether the 'locative' tendency of Chinese popular religion, which Faure opposes to the *utopian*, 'unlocalized conceptions of Buddhism as universal doctrine' (Faure 1987: 338) may also be applied to the anthropological endeavour and to its prevalent disposition to favour the latter at the expense of the former.

Chapter Five

Fragments from 'popular tradition': telling stories and other representations of Tudi Gong

5.1 Introduction: fragments from 'popular tradition'

5.2 Telling stories about Tudi Gong

From stories to other representations of Tudi Gong

5.3 Other representations of Tudi Gong

5.4 Discussion

5.1 Introduction: fragments from 'popular tradition'

Despite His prevalence and popularity among the people of Taiwan, *Tudi Gong* seems to have been given an disproportionately small place in anthropological and sinological studies. The attempts which have been made mainly mention or describe place-based cultural practices associated with the cult,¹ or engage in a classical sinological overview of it through the history of Chinese civilisation and its links with the cult of the land in ancient China.² While the former normally favours a synchronic approach, stressing the association of specific places with their *Tudi Gongs* and the link that these have with local histories and oral traditions, the latter naturally prefers a diachronic one, mainly quoting and discussing those Chinese classical texts which, according to the authors, may shed some light on the complicated historical development of the cult.

It is not my intention, here, either to overview the various articles on the subject, or to engage in a historical analysis on the development of the cult. Nor do I intend to overestimate one approach and neglect the other. Both are valuable and indispensable approaches and have been taken into account in the process of writing this thesis.

What I will present in this chapter is a variegated range of fragments from 'popular tradition' on *Tudi Gong*, which, I feel, constitutes a privileged locus upon which to further situate and represent the cult of *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan. This variety of textual and oral materials stems from a diversity of genres, contexts and sources. They range from stories, anecdotes and proverbs to temple pamphlets and books on Chinese and Taiwanese customs and traditions; from story books for children to *Tudi Gong* games and songs; from iconographies to representations in various media (e.g. television and magazines). These will give, I believe, another flavour of the diversity of ways people represent, talk of and experience the presence of *Tudi Gong* in the practice of their everyday life.

¹ See for example Lin Mei-Rong's recent publication 'A bibliography of Taiwanese folk religion' (1997: 71-4), in which she quotes various articles which deal with the subject from both an anthropological and/or folkloristic perspective. To note especially Masuda (1975), Lin Mei-Rong (1987a; 1990; 1992b) and Gao Xian-Zhi (1991a; 1991b; 1995b).

² The most representative in this line of investigation is Chavannes (1910) with his *Le dieu du sol dans la Chine antique*, a substantial appendix to his *Le T'ai Chan. Essai de monographie d'un culte Chinois*. The article on the 'god of the soil in ancient China' was first published in 1901 in the *Revue de l'histoire des religions* (t. XLIII, p.125-146) with the title: *Le dieu du sol dans l'ancienne religion chinoise*. In addition, Blodget (1894), Bishop (1933), Williams (1936), Buck (1951), have also contributed to this approach.

Some of the stories and representations I will introduce in this chapter, and those I have already presented in the previous ones, were narrated or related to me on several occasions and by different people. Very often, friends of mine would provide me with newspapers clippings or other written or visual material which reported stories, anecdotes and any kind of representation of *Tudi Gong*. However, I have also relied on stories and representations already presented in the written literature of anthropologists and scholars of Taiwanese society. The amount of material collected has forced me to select and introduce only a small part of it in this thesis.

What strikes me as very significant is the *variety* of this material and, especially, the fact that popular tradition on *Tudi Gong* does not seem to wane. On the contrary, *Tudi Gong* continues to be a source of inspiration in the contemporary practice of Taiwanese everyday life.

Let me give the reader a first example. While writing this chapter, I received from Taiwan a small leaflet which advertises apartments in *Wenshan*, one of the districts of *Taipei* city. On the cover, the representation of *Tudi Gong* is coupled with the following wording:

土地公、土地公、來了那麼多次、房子的事、我還是放不下心、怎麼辦？

Tudi Gong, Tudi Gong, I went so many times (to worship You), but I still feel unsafe about the business of the house, what can be done about it?

The ethnographic material I will introduce in this chapter is, I believe, concerned with a central question: '*What does Tudi Gong represent for the people of Taiwan?*' People's senses of attachment towards *Tudi Gong* are not only expressed in the establishment of temples and through worship, but also through a variegated, though fragmented, array of stories and representations which are continuously created and re-created through time and space.

The act of hearing, reading, collecting and writing about these stories and representations of *Tudi Gong* has been entertaining both for myself and for the people with whom I interacted during fieldwork. At the same time it has furnished, in a pleasurable manner, valuable, singular and immediate insights towards a wider understanding of the character of *Tudi Gong*.

Against anthropological 'paternalism'...

While trying to 'pattern' this material into an organised chapter, I have been confronted with the question of how to present to the reader the glut of popular tradition on *Tudi Gong* without losing the 'vivacity', 'immediacy' and 'variety' of its content. There seems to be the risk in anthropology, I feel, to 'paternalise' and 'uni-form' the ethnographic material collected to such an extent that the 'multivocality' of the stories heard and of the places in which we conduct our fieldworks may be

distorted or even silenced. Aware of this, I have chosen to present this chapter in a manner which discreetly comments upon the variety of *Tudi Gong* stories and representations generated in the Taiwanese context. I also consider this chapter to be an expansion of the previous one and a feasible ethnographic perspective which will inform some of the discussions I will introduce in the next one.

Furthermore, in this chapter, but no less in the previous one, I have tried to resist the urge of merely presenting to the reader a set of distinctive and fabricated *Tudi Gong* features and constants, almost in a structuralist manner, at the expense of His variable and, sometimes, contradictory connotations. In other words, I have attempted not to concentrate on the 'regularity' and 'uniformity' of His representations but rather the variety of ways people and places in contemporary Taiwan 'relate' to *Tudi Gong*. Through this approach, I would also like to question anthropology's over-emphasis on its 'will to pattern' what, in the practice of everyday life of the people among whom anthropologists conduct their fieldwork, is not necessarily, and, I feel, should not be entirely, 'patterned.' There is, in fact, a considerable degree of 'flexibility' and 'variability' in the way the Taiwanese represent *Tudi Gong* which, hopefully, will be shown in the following two parts. In addition, in this chapter I intend to demonstrate that stories and representations of *Tudi Gong* constitute a unique and significant corpus of ethnographic material which should contribute towards the construction of anthropological knowledge on the subject.

Local popular knowledge of *Tudi Gong* has shown itself to be an ongoing and highly creative arena of meanings and interpretations that the Taiwanese employ to exemplify and expand on *Tudi Gong's functions and connotations* as well as to *translate*, in a *discursive, visual and performative* manner, their attachment as well as their changing senses towards *Tudi Gong*. The following two parts of this chapter are intended to present to the reader a variegated array of such *discursive, visual and performative* representations of *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan. In the concluding part, I wish to indicate that the continuous creation of stories and representations of *Tudi Gong* is very much part of Taiwanese popular tradition, or, one may say, of that legacy of the past which is variously adapted to the social changes occurring in today's Taiwan.

As I will argue in the final chapter of this thesis, these representations, together with the material I have introduced in chapter four, have the potential of giving scope for exploring and analysing the dynamic social changes which have been occurring in contemporary Taiwan, and people's strategic adaptations to these changes. They will also generate a speculation on the relative valencies of *Chinese* cultural continuity versus historical and topographical specificities and conjunctures.

5.2 Telling stories about Tudi Gong

Tudi Gong as a model of 功德 'gongde'

For the Taiwanese in general, *Tudi Gong* 'loves the people. His only desire is to see them happy. His every instinct is to grant their every wish' (Petrie 1972: 42), to protect them in any activity they might engage in and to intercede, willingly, on their behalf. Thus, 功德 *gongde*, the acting for the common good without expecting anything in return, seems to be one of the essential *Tudi Gong*'s characteristics and functions. One of the most famous stories of *Tudi Gong*, which almost every Taiwanese would know tells that,

Tudi Gong's
功德 *gongde*

Tudi Po as metaphorically representing particularistic interests as opposed to Tudi Gong's humanitarian concerns. Tudi Po is represented as resisting Tudi Gong's gongde.

Tudi Po's view seem to symbolise a maintenance and reinforcement of a hierarchical distinction in society, as providing ideological support for a hierarchically organised social system. Tudi Gong, on the contrary, symbolises a more egalitarian society.

Turner's concept of structure versus communitas may be suggestive here (Turner 1974:166).

Tudi Po is often represented as scolding her husband for being too good-hearted and forces Him to be obedient to her. Thus the saying: 土地公怕老婆 'Tudi Gong is hen-pecked.'

Can this be read as women's resistance and threat to the patrilineality and patrilocality of the Chinese family? Can women be seen here as family/society 'subverters' and men as indicators of stability?

one day, Yuhuang Dadi 玉皇大帝, the Emperor of all the spirits of the Chinese pantheon, sent Tudi Gong among the people to perform some 'good deeds.' Yuhuang Dadi first asked if he had some wishes before starting such an important mission.

The 'good-hearted' Tudi Gong promptly said that he hoped to help all people in the world to become rich and have a happy life. The Emperor was very moved by such words, but was upset at hearing that Tudi Po 土地婆 angrily opposed such a good wish. She reckoned that there should be rich and poor people in the world in order to succeed and make society prosperous.

If everybody is rich who will take care of all the humble works in society? If everybody is rich who will carry the sedan-chair of our daughter when she marries?

Tudi Gong could not give an answer to these questions and, although very sad, had to accept his wife's suggestions and limit the scope of his mission. This is why there still are rich and poor people in the world.

When the people knew this story, Qian Lu notes, they reckoned 'Tudi Po is not up to expectations' (土地婆不夠意思) because she did not allow everybody the chance of

getting rich. Therefore, they decided to worship only *Tudi Gong* and to 'break the communication' (拒絕往來) with his wife (Qian Lu 1990: 19).

The following story expands on the theme of *gongde*, by presenting the case of *Liu Lang*, a ghost who for his generosity was appointed as a local *Tudi Gong*. The story, entitled *The ghost friend* (Wu Xi-Zhen 1989: 181-7), tells the mysterious episode which happened to a fisherman living in *Shuiyuan xiang* 水源鄉.

Chinese desire for conviviality, friendship and association which extends beyond the human world.

Gift-offerings as a way to win the favour of the 'other,' to make the unfamiliar familiar, to create good connections.

A fisherman, who was surnamed Xu 許, used to enjoy, at night, some wine on his boat on the river. He would, however, first spill a glass of wine in the river, 'It is not enjoyable to drink alone, it is better to drink together with the river friends,' the fisherman told his wife.

One night he got a bit drunk but was happy at hearing the sound of fish jumping in his net. Suddenly, a young man appeared on his boat and the fisherman invited him to drink a glass together. 'What's your name? Young man, you do not live in this village!'

The young man hesitantly replied that he had come from a far-away place, 'I will be here only temporarily. My surname is Wang 王 and I am the sixth child of my parents, so you can call me Liu Lang 六郎,' he explained to the fisherman.

The two friends spent a lot of time together drinking and fishing, there on the river. Liu Lang, however, would often be silent, as though something was occupying his mind. One day, almost half a year after their first meeting, the young man decided to tell the fisherman his secret. 'A few years ago I was passing through this place and because I was drunk, I drowned in this river. As you would spill a glass of wine in the water during the nights that you spent on the river, I was very happy to become your friend. Tomorrow a young woman will drown in this river. She is my replacement. When she becomes a ghost I can be reincarnated. Take care of yourself,' the sad ghost said while emptying his last

Can the fate of humans and deities be manipulated? The Chinese popular conception of fate distinguishes two notions: 先天 xiantian and 後天 houtian. While the former sees fate as predetermined and fixed, the latter leaves room for manoeuvring and manipulation. There seems to be a strong tendency in Taiwan to think that the 'houtian' fate (in this world and in the afterlife) can be manipulated and ameliorated through acting in accordance with gongde, through specific religious rituals and by giving offerings to the temples.

This partly active view of fate, in which human effort plays an important role, makes the dichotomy between structure and agency rather contingent and relative.

It is not unusual in Taiwanese popular belief that a 'ghost becomes a god.' Harrell (1974: 195) writes that 'some spirits...have an intermediate status. Though originally kui, in some circumstances they take on characteristics of *sin*, often achieving a status that contains both *kui* and *sin* elements, and occasionally even changing their nature entirely and becoming full-fledged gods.' In addition, it was explained to me that in Buddhist popular tradition there is the case of a person who became a ghost and then a Tudi Gong.

Here, one may stress the theme of the contingency, creation and manipulation of the gods-ghost dichotomy in Chinese religious view.

glass of wine. The fisherman tried to comfort his friend telling him that, finally, he could be reincarnated.

Back home he told to his wife what had happened and in the following days he went to the river and saw, as Liu Lang had said, a young woman that was going to kill herself in the river. She left her baby crying on the margin of the water. The fisherman was in a dilemma. Should he go and save the girl? And what about Liu Lang, who could not be reincarnated if he saved her. It was the baby crying, however, that convinced him to run towards the girl.

He was forced to stop as the girl, already in the water, was taken back near her baby. That same evening the fisherman had the answer.

'Brother Xu, I am back to see you,' Liu Lang said. The fisherman knew it already. The ghost friend explained that he did not know that the young woman had a child. He did not have the courage to allow that young creature to be separated from its mother. The fisherman was touched and invited Liu Lang to drink with him.

'Good intentions surely have their reward,' a Chinese saying goes. After some time, Liu Lang appeared in front of his friend wearing a purple official robe: 'Brother, this time I have to go. What I did last time touched the heart of the Spirit of the Water. He told the Jade Emperor and he recommended me as Shuiyuan village Tudi Gong. In the future I will have duties to attend and so I will not be able to come to keep you company, but I will miss you very much.' The fisherman continued to spend his nights on the river, drinking and fishing. He would feel the presence of his good friend Liu Lang who had become the local Tudi Gong. A temple was built for him in the village and Tudi Gong wore a purple official robe. Joss sticks and candles would burn abundantly every day on His altar.

The theme of *Tudi Gong's gongde* is further elaborated in the following two stories. According to a story of the *Fude* temple 福德廟 in *Dajia* township 大甲鎮, Lin Jin-Yi (1984: 423) writes that

Agricultural connotation of *Tudi Gong*.

in ancient China there was a very kind-hearted old man who would help poor people: for the common good, he exhausted all his mental energy. Because he often taught and guided farmers to irrigate the farmland, when he died he was worshipped as Tudi Gong.

Lin Jin-Yi (1984: 423) continues by reporting another story which is related to the *Fude* temple 福德廟 in *Jinshan* 金山. This story introduces

First *Tudi Gong's* birthday in the annual ritual cycle.

Second *Tudi Gong's* birthday in the annual ritual cycle.

Chinese conception of religion as 'mutually beneficial' and contractual.

a man from Gansu province, Lingzhou 甘肅省靈州 whose name is Tang Su 唐肅. He was born a few hundred years ago on the second day of the second lunar month. A strong man, he was expert in both agriculture and fishing and would normally help those in need to the extent that he devoted all his possessions to this cause. Unfortunately he died on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month. At the time of his death his facial expression was full of Fude 福德 so that people worshipped him as Tudi Gong and started to believe that by giving money and offerings to Tudi Gong, one will receive immense reward in heaven.

There is another element that has to be highlighted in these two stories. Although the anecdotes are linked to *Tudi Gong* temples located in Taiwan (*Dajia* and *Jinshan*), the two *Tudi Gongs* mentioned above are from mainland China: the first story mentions 'ancient China,' the second, more specifically, sites the place of origin of the *Tudi Gong* in *Gansu* province, *Lingzhou*.

It would be almost impossible to trace back the origin of *Tudi Gong* stories and detect the names of the various 'kind-hearted' old men to which they usually refer. Although in some stories some *Tudi Gongs* have been addressed by their names (張明德 *Zhang Ming-De* or 張福德 *Zhang Fu-De*), it seems that what really matters is what they mainly represent: *the acting for the common good in favour of the people living in a specific place*. Through a public recognition and canonization of people (and ghosts, see *Liu Lang*) of virtue to the status of *Tudi Gong*, a collective desire towards the practice of *gongde* is expressed and encouraged both at the personal and at the

communal level. As a summary, the contrasting representations of *Tudi Gong* and *Tudi Po* portrayed in the above stories could refer, in my view, to some of the 'complementary forces' which characterize the 'Chinese' practice of everyday life:

<i>Tudi Gong</i>	<i>Tudi Po</i>
<i>Humanitarian concerns</i>	<i>Particularistic interests</i>
<i>Egalitarian society</i>	<i>Hierarchical distinction in society</i>
<i>'Communitas'</i>	<i>'Structure'</i>
<i>'Houtian' fate (changeable)</i>	<i>'Xiantian' fate (fixed)</i>
<i>Stability through patrilineality</i>	<i>Subversion/resistance to patrilineality</i>

Policing the ghosts and association with the earth

Tudi Gong's function of policing the ghosts (*gui*), which are associated with the earth, has already been presented in this thesis (see introductory part and chapter four). Connected to this, there is an interesting anecdote which I was told while in *Yongxing* village. A man in his fifties, who now lives in *Taoyuan*, told me that:

almost thirty five years ago I was living in the area of Minhe (民和村) . One day I was astonished at hearing that a spirit medium (in Taiwanese tangki 童乩) was able to find the bones of 'people of the prairie' (平地人) who had been killed by aborigines. With some friends, I ran to see what was happening. Local people were saying that Tudi Gong was guiding the spirit medium to find the bones and that they had asked the tangki to do that because 'inauspicious events' (不平安的事情) had been happening in the locality.

Although I have not found any example during my fieldwork and in Taiwanese folk religion literature which indicates that *Tudi Gong* can 'talk' through a spirit medium, the anecdote reported above seems to show that He can 'give guidance' through a spirit medium in order to control and drive out the ghosts from a specific locality. It is, in fact, a widespread assertion in Chinese and Taiwanese folk religion that until the bones of dead people, who have died prematurely or violently, are properly buried, they can cause trouble to people as they are believed to be ghosts. In

addition, Schipper (1977: 660-1) writes that

T'u-ti-kung keeps out the 'kuei,' 'ghosts' or 'demons.' In ancient times a courageous county official drove out the 'kuei' from one locality after another with such vigor that they dared not return. He was deified.³

Tudi Gong's association with the earth is also exemplified in the fact that He is assumed to keep out the snakes. In Taiwan there is also the widespread conception that people who 'dream about snakes' should go, as soon as possible, to the nearest *Tudi Gong* temple to worship, thus associating snakes with accidents which may happen and the confidence that *Tudi Gong* has the power to 'exorcise' the evil premonition. Schipper (1977: 661) reports the story of

In this story, what could be stressed is the theme of the nurture/nutrition of the snake which, subsequently, turns against his master and against the community.

Can the 'maturity' of the snake (junior generations) be seen as a threat, an inversion of filial piety and community life (senior generations)?

an old gentleman who kept a general store found what he thought was a duck egg. He took it home. It hatched and out came a snake, which the old man reared. When he was absent, the snake ate the chickens and the ducks of other people. Thereupon the old gentleman turned the snake loose. But it grew and attacked people and cattle. The emperor heard of it and ordered the snake to be subdued. As no one else answered the emperor's call, the old gentleman went himself and killed the snake. He was canonized as T'u-ti-kung.⁴

Lin Jin-Yi (1984: 423) writes a slightly different version of this story. He points out that this story is linked to a *Tudi Gong* temple in Qidu Zhuang 七堵庄:

It is said that in old China a father and his son were living together, relying on each other to make ends meet. One day the son died and the father was greatly distressed.

Some time later, an 'immortal' (神仙) appeared to the old man and told him: 'Walk onward, you will meet your

³ Schipper quotes Chiang Chia-chin, *T'ai-nan shih chih kao, Tsung chiao pien* (Draft gazetteer of Tainan municipality, Section on religion; 1959), p. 21.

⁴ Schipper quotes Chiang Chia-chin, *T'ai-nan shih chih kao, Tsung chiao pien* (Draft gazetteer of Tainan municipality, Section on religion; 1959), p. 21.

The theme highlighted above is expanded and somehow clarified in this version of the story which seems particularly to refer to the conflictual tension among generations in Chinese society.

The generation / degeneration dichotomy is superseded by a third regenerative stage in which the stability of the community is restored. Do rituals, for example, exemplify this regenerative stage in the community / territory?

son. While walking, suddenly a beautiful snake appeared in front of him. Thinking that this was the reincarnation of his son, the old man took the snake home and raised it. When it grew, he let it free to find food by itself. However, the snake started to attack people and cattle, and everybody was very frightened. The old man thought that it was his responsibility to find a solution to the problem, so he decided to kill it. Peace returned to the village and the local official, to thank the courageous old man, decided, after his death, that he should be worshipped as Tudi Gong.

In the above stories, Tudi Gong's functions of policing ghosts and keeping out snakes are indicative of His power to exorcise and re-generate the place/community from all those forces which may endanger it. His Yin and Yang characteristics (see chapter four) allow Tudi Gong to play an intermediary role between the two realms and, consequently, in the very life of the community He protects.⁵ Tudi Gong's 'charismatic authority' and His relationship with the place/community in which He is sited are clearly emphasised by Schipper (1977: 664) who notes that,

the general term for a holy place or auspicious locale is fu-ti. In the religious geography of Taoism, the world has precisely 72 such fu-ti where salvation can be obtained. But in modern religion, the application of this concept has been extended and every temple, every tomb, and, it would appear, every neighbourhood is such a fu-ti, which makes us understand why they are invariably placed under the guardianship of a T'u-ti-kung. In Taiwan even today, the heads of traditional communities are preferably elderly gentlemen whose virtue and experience have earned them the respect of all. One calls them lao-ta or ch'i-lao, and the community that includes a man worthy of the name is considered fortunate indeed. T'u-ti-kung is the perfect ch'i-lao. He personifies the communal spirit that ultimately derives from the politico-religious mass movements of early China.

⁵ Schipper writes that, 'the name of T'u-ti, conspicuously absent from classical and official literary works, does figure in the liturgy of the early Taoist church. In the rite for the consecration of the incense burner, already practiced in the sixth century and still used today by Taiwanese priests, the spirit of the holy place where the ritual is enacted is called upon to serve as the intermediary between the community, on the one hand, and Heaven and the other spheres of the universe, on the other' (Schipper 1977: 663-4).

The following part, however, interestingly challenges the 'benevolent' representations of *Tudi Gong* to a considerable degree, thus showing the 'other face of *Tudi Gong*.'

The other face of Tudi Gong

It seems that in some localities, the fabrication and telling of *Tudi Gong* stories firmly hold to His main characteristics and functions. In some other localities, however, His stories seem to have travelled in different directions, sometimes contradictory, thus showing the other face of *Tudi Gong*. Not the honest, the good-hearted, the amenable and the easy to cheat *Tudi Gong*, but rather the trickster, the sly, the egoist and the bribed *Tudi Gong*. The following two stories, collected by Eberhard and Feuchtwang, highlight these contradictory characteristics: the first, one can say, plays around the theme of reciprocity and its abuses, the second seems to accentuate the theme of power of money, which can be used for good and for bad, versus the appropriate observance of duly hierarchic relationships.

In the first story (Eberhard 1937: 213-15) narrates that

in a certain district there was an Earth God on the South Mountain and another on the North Mountain, but being stationed in such out-of-the-way places, it was long since they had received incense or any other form of sacrifice, and both were on the verge of starvation.

One day the Earth God of the Southern Mountain saw a young cowherd go past his temple, and, without a moment's hesitation, the god stretched out his hand and stroked the boy's body several times. On arriving home, the boy began to burn all over and became very ill. His family were distracted with worry, but suddenly they heard a voice saying from the boy's mouth: 'I am the God of the Southern Mountain. I have come to drive away the illness, which was caused by the mountain spirits. If you go to the temple of the Earth God and cut a piece off the camphor tree in front of it and give it to the boy to drink, he will be cured.'

The people all cast themselves on to the ground when they heard that the Earth God was present, and the father of the boy followed his directions to cut off a piece from the camphor tree, boiled it, and gave it to his son to drink. A quarter of an hour later the invalid had recovered.

The next day the family sent a pig's head, five beasts of sacrifice, and various other gifts, to thank the god for his favour. The god was overjoyed at the success of his plans and sent a servant to invite the God of the Northern Mountain to dinner.

On receipt of the invitation the god hurried across at once. At the sight of the choice meal his mouth began to water and he begged his host to tell him by what means he had acquired such a repast. 'A man cannot always stay poor,' said the Southern God proudly. 'One only needs to think out a plan.' 'Do come to the point and tell me how you did it,' said his guest. 'Don't be in such a hurry, I will tell you later. We are terribly hungry now.' But during dinner, the Southern Earth God related the whole story to his guest, who noted every word so as to imitate him and have some luck himself.

By a fortunate chance a cowherd went by his temple on the following day. The god stroked him several times as he had been told, and he noticed that the boy received a terrible shock. He ran home and became very ill, whereupon the god spoke out of his mouth as follows: 'You must go to the temple of the Earth God of the Northern Mountain and cut a piece off the camphor tree near by, cook it, and give it to the sick boy to drink.'

The father naturally rushed off to the temple, but, although he searched everywhere, he could find no camphor tree behind the temple. He stood dumbly wondering what to do, when he remembered that the image itself was made of camphor wood, and he decided, therefore, to cut a piece off the god; but, thinking that it would be too painful in front, he lifted up the god's dress and cut a bit off his behind. This he boiled and gave to his son with the greatest success, for the boy became well at once.

Unfortunately this man was desperately poor, he could scarcely earn his daily bread, so that it never occurred to him to offer a sacrifice to the Earth God. The god, however, thought that they were bad people, from whom he had not only received no benefits but even injury, and the more he thought about the matter the angrier he became, until he decided to vent his ill-humour on his neighbour. He hobbled over to his temple, where the god looked at him in surprise and then asked: 'I have not seen you for so long, brother. How altered you are.'

The Northern God did not even take the time to sit down, but launched into an account of his misfortunes to soothe his mind. But the Southern God was not at all sympathetic, and laughed till his sides ached. 'Ha! Ha! You must be careful what kind of family you choose. If you never even thought about that, you also can have had no idea that there is no camphor tree near your temple. If one is so stupid and gets injured, it is no good blaming on someone else.'

The second story, reported by Feuchtwang (1992: 97-99), tells that

the present Locality God [Thote Kong, in Taiwanese] is not the same as the old one. The present one has no beard. He is called Ng Leto, and comes from Ankhue [Anxi]. He was employed as a cashier.

On the fifteenth day of the eight month, Thote Kong's birthday, as he was going home to his wife, a long walk, the cashier stopped because it was hot and went for a swim. He put his clothes on a Thote Kong shrine's table and swam in the stream nearby. There is, or should always be, a stream near every Thote Kong shrine.

This [dumping of the clothes on the shrine table] offended Thote Kong, and when the cashier got home he had a stomach ache. His wife asked him whether he had done anything wrong on the way home. He said no, but told her about his swim and putting his clothes on the Thote Kong shrine table. She guessed that this might have been the cause of the trouble and took offerings to the shrine, asking for forgiveness. Her husband then got well.

The cashier was indignant that Thote Kong had made him ill in order to receive offerings and he saw that the gods of the Earth Court [one of the three major regions of celestial administration] were capable of taking pay-off money (tham ci:). He wanted to take Thote Kong to court and he asked his boss whether this was possible. The boss said it was very difficult to take a god to court. But he did write for the cashier a yellow dispatch containing the accusation against Thote Kong, appealing to the judgement of Sengong Ia (the City God), and burnt it at an incense burner.

Then the cashier went to sleep so that his soul could depart and go to court with Thote Kong to appear before Sengong Ia. Thote Kong said in court that it was not he who had given the cashier a stomach ache and that the offerings were made at the cashier's wife's own wish. But the cashier said it was Thote Kong who had agreed [through divination blocks] to acquiesce to his wife's request that after she had presented the offering he, Thote Kong, would make her husband's stomach ache better.

It was now up to Sengong Ia's judgement. But Sengong Ia being boss of the Thote Kong was on Thote Kong's side and also thought that someone in the world of the living who accused a god would be a great trouble-maker once he entered the Yin world. So he punished the cashier with forty strokes across his behind.

When the cashier awoke he told his boss that he had an aching behind and that he would appeal to Yok Hong Siong Te [Yu Huang Shang Ti, the Jade Emperor of Heaven]. But the boss said it was not possible for a human being to do so. Instead the cashier appealed to Thai Pe Kim Sien [the Great White and Golden Immortal] who is a kind of secret agent who reports to Yok Hong Siong Te on both the Yang and Yin worlds. But Thai Pe Kim Sien did not dare take charge of this case, the first in which a human accused a god. Instead he reported it to Yok Hong Siong Te, who got a headache with it. He called for the cashier and asked him to report all that had happened. He then praised the virtue of the cashier and said he would forgive him for accusing a god.

Yok Hong Siong Te summoned two gods, Ia lu Sin [the Night Wandering Spirit] and Zit lu Sin [the day Wondering Spirit]. People say that the Day Wondering Spirit is the same as Cao Kun [the Stove God, in every household], but he is not. Every time you raise your head three inches, the Day Wondering Spirit is there - he wanders everywhere.

These two were sent down to the Yang world with the cashier and Yok Hong Siong Te also gave him a pearl. Back in the Yang world whenever the cashier shook the pearl a heap of money came out of it and he became very rich and the Day Wandering Spirit protected him. He spent money on helping the poor in his country, and was so influential that even the county magistrate who, as was so common with human officials, accepted pay-off money, was afraid of him.

Meanwhile the Night Wandering Spirit changed form into a Wilderness Demon [Ia Kui, whose control is one of the special provinces of Thote Kong] and thus met Thote Kong. He offered Thote Kong gold taels in exchange for food.

Thote Kong accepted the gold but did not give him any food, saying that he should not ask a god for food. For food he should go to humans. At this, the Night Wandering Spirit turned back into his true shape and told Thote Kong that he now had evidence that he, Thote Kong, did accept pay-off money, and went to report to Thai Pe Kim Sien.

In the Yang world the county magistrate sent his bodyguards to demand the pearl from the cashier. But someone had notified the cashier in advance, so he ran off, taking the pearl with him. When the guards came to his house they questioned the cashier's wife and she was forced to tell them that her husband had run off. They gave chase and the cashier's wife followed them. They caught up with the cashier at a great rock, and he leaped from it, killing himself. This is why people often call Thote Kong the God of the Rock (Ciouq-thau Kong). The cashier's wife leapt off too, and she became Thote Ma, the wife of Thote Kong.

These two stories, which portray an ambiguous and contradictory image of *Tudi Gong*, give scope for pointing out that, especially in cities, some *Tudi Gong* temples are 'taken care of' by the local *linzhang* or *lizhang*. The official power of this administrative local authority does not necessarily coincide with the charismatic authority often attached, as shown above, to elderly gentlemen who, traditionally, are regarded as 'guides' of the community.

In several occasions, it was pointed out to me that the intriguing and dubious businesses of local politics, in some cases associated with criminal organisations and activities, may have taken advantage of *Tudi Gong* temples to create a network of favourable connections in order to gain power and control over a specific territory/community.

Thus, it is not unusual or surprising that *Tudi Gong*, through the stories people create about Him, may be associated with bribes, abuse of power, failed reciprocity or with the 'gambling fever' which

Taiwan experienced in the 80s (see chapter four). In addition the 'localised features' of *Tudi Gong* and His connections with local narratives of places do indeed offer grounds for generating significant information (see next part), both for local inhabitants and for the anthropologists, on the 'dark side' of the Taiwanese everyday life.

Place and Tudi Gong

It has already been stressed in the thesis that *Tudi Gong* occupies a low status in the religious pantheon. He is, therefore, often cheated by His human clientele, thus counterbalancing the representation of Him which is portrayed in these last two stories.

His low status is often depicted by representing a *Tudi Gong* who 'receives orders from the emperor or higher officials' (朝廷命官). In the following story, *Tudi Gong* seems to be aware of His own rank and, it may be said, He is aware of the 'flexible imagined position' given to Him by worshippers.

In addition, *Tudi Gong* cults and His imagined positions and representations may be context specific. In fact, although in Taiwan *Tudi Gong*'s statues are usually placed on an altar, in Henan 河南 and Guangdong 廣東 many of His statues are sited on the ground. In Hong Kong 香港 *Tudi Gong* is often sited on the pavement in a small hole between two houses. Qian Lu (1990: 19-22) reports a story which tells that

the Ming dynasty founding emperor, Zhu Yuan-Zhang 朱元璋, would frequently go travelling around. Once he met a friend of his and together went to a tavern to drink wine.

The place was already full, but Zhu Yuan-Zhang noticed that the only free table was an altar which was occupied by a Tudi Gong statue. He took the statue and temporarily sited it in the corner near the wall. He said to Tudi Gong: 'Lend me your altar for a while.'

While drinking wine, they engaged in a 'making up Chinese couplets contest.' From the couplets the two friends made (千里為重重山重水慶府 and 一人成大大邦大國大明君), Tudi Gong understood that the man who placed Him on the floor was the emperor.

When the two friends left, the tavern owner thought of replacing the statue on the altar. But Tudi Gong told him: 'The emperor ordered that I should sit on the floor. You do not need to put me back on the table.'

Another story, which expands on the above themes, was related to me by a geomancy expert I met at the *Zhongde Gong* in Taipei. He told me that

in old China, through the 'civil service examination system' (科舉考試), some people would become officials and be appointed to specific localities (thus 'locality official' 地方官), away from their places of origin. It is said that as they arrived at their assigned posts, they would first meet what we today call Lizhang 里長 or Quzhang 區長, the head of a neighbourhood or a district, and then they would go together to the local Tudi Gong temple.

As the official's 'status' (身份) was higher than that of Tudi Gong, he would use his 'baton' (權杖), the emblem of his office, to symbolically beat Tudi Gong three times in order to wake him up and command him to 'guide' (帶路) the official through the locality with which Tudi Gong was very familiar.

Here, *Tudi Gong* is also portrayed as a guide, whose accurate 'local knowledge' is needed by the 'locality official' as an introduction to the newly assigned place. Given their stability and geographical proliferation in both urban neighborhoods and rural villages of modern Taiwan, local *Tudi Gongs* and their temples may still be used as a guide to and introduction of specific places and local histories. As already highlighted previously, the *Tudi Gong* temples in *Datong* district, for example, proved to be incomparable 'fixed reference points,' in a polyhedral and confusing city such as *Taipei*, from which to expand and deepen my knowledge of local places and histories.

In this vein, one may stress that *Tudi Gongs* and their temples have often been 'silent' witnesses to local events, some of which are quite memorable in the history of specific places. *Tudi Gong* temples could be regarded, in fact, not only as 'fixed reference points' in space but also in time.

As an example, Lin Heng-Dao reports the anecdote of a *Tudi Gong* temple which is sited in *Jilong* 基隆 in the locality *Shiqiuling* 獅球嶺. I visited the *Pingan Gong* 平安宮 several times during the first stage of my fieldwork. Mr. *Jiang* 蔣 introduced me to the temple and, there, I also enjoyed the welcome and friendship of Mr. *Wang* 王, the then seventy-five year old temple keeper.

The *Pingan Gong* was established just after the year 1769: it is said that the victory against the French in 1884 was attributed to the help and protection of this temple's *Tudi Gong* (Guan Shan-Qing 1980: 83). The temple became a constant stopping point for worship for the people travelling from *Ilan* to *Taipei* (Guan Shan-Qing 1980: 83), as *Jilong* was on the only possible route connecting the two cities. Lin (1980: 95-6) writes that

in 1895 the city of Jilong was occupied by the Japanese and all those local people and soldiers who resisted the new colonial power were taken in front of the Ping An Gong. One by one, they would be beheaded and their bodies thrown down from the ridge of the mountain. After killing many people, the Japanese wanted to burn the Tudi Gong temple. It was then that an old man, who was living in the vicinity, ran to the temple and embraced the

Tudi Gong statue. When the Japanese saw this, they ordered the old man to kneel down as they intended to behead him. The old man said to the statue which he was holding in his arms: 'Tudi Gong, I have just saved you, now quickly save me!' A Japanese soldier, swinging his sword, pushed the body of the old man down the pit, certain that he had beheaded him.

It is not known whether his prayer to Tudi Gong or the dimness of the evening, caused the Japanese soldier's sword to chop only the upper part of the old man's hat. His life was spared but, even today, the locality below the Ping An Gong is still called 'the pit where people were beheaded' (台人坑 tairen keng), in remembrance of those who actually died.

Not only can *Tudi Gong* be represented as a 'silent' witness of local events, but also, as an individual who is 'marked' by the place in which He performs His duties as *Tudi Gong*. Li He (1994: 29) reports an interesting joke which tells that

One day, the Jade Emperor summoned the Tudi Gongs of the whole earth for a meeting in heaven. The Jade Emperor was wondering why all the Tudi Gongs who convened had rosy facial complexions with the exception of one whose face was black. He could not help asking him:

'You are the Tudi Gong of which place?

'Taiwan,' the Tudi Gong replied.

'Taiwan is a good place, it is true that it is quite a hot place but this should not make your face so black,' the Jade Emperor continued.

'I want to inform the Jade Emperor that my black face is caused by people's fierce 'engagement in land speculation' (炒地皮),' *Tudi Gong explained.*

The three characters 炒地皮 literally mean: to fry/roast, land and skin. A continuous engagement in land speculation, 'the roasting of the land's skin,' makes the land and the face of its protector *Tudi Gong* become black. Besides, the colour black is often associated with illegal activities.

A further story I have come across is reported by Petrie (1972: 39-40) who writes that, '*the degree to which these gods are considered to be individuals with individual personalities may be shown by the following story told to me by a friend who lived in Taishan on the road between Hsinchuang and Linkou.*' There is indeed in the story a representation of a *Tudi Gong* with His own likes, dislikes, desires and revengefulness. There is also, however, I feel, a clear concern with geomancy. The 'old man,' in fact, '*wants to be where he can look out on the growing field.*' In the Chinese context,

geomancy does not only concern human beings and their dwellings, but also deities and their temples. As I was told, the Taiwanese believe that if a deity is sited in a place where there is a 'bad geomancy' (不好的風水), He or She would not wish to remain there and would cause all kinds of trouble to a family or a village. The story narrates that

the Su family had suffered a series of business reverses in the last year or so. Since the management of the family affairs seemed as good as it had ever been during the period of their prosperity, the head of the family decided to consult a local fortune teller to determine if there was some malignant influence affecting their fortunes. The fortune teller told them that all their misfortunes could be traced to one cause: 'The old man is tired of being cooped up in the house. He wants to be given a house of his own and he wants to be where he can look out on the growing field.' Since the clan was headed by a matriarch and the oldest son, who was about sixty, was out most of the day, the family was hard put to understand exactly what the fortune teller was talking about.

This particular fortune teller, however, was credited with being almost infallible. When the family could find no solution, they decided in desperation to move away from the house, thinking that if there was a malignant spirit there, and it was cooped up in the house, it probably would not be able to follow them to another place.

While they were packing their goods, cleaning up the accumulation of useless things which had gathered in odd corners as things have a habit of doing in old houses (theirs had been built before the turn of the century), one of the maids found a statue of Tu Ti Kung. No one was able to understand how it had come to be there until they thought to ask the matriarch. She, being 87 years old, could remember back to the earliest days when the family fortune turned for the better.

In 1905 the family had decided to expand the house. The only practical direction to build the new wing was right over the shrine of the local Tu Ti Kung. They went to the temple and had the local saigong (Taoist priest) petition heaven asking if it would be possible to move the god and the shrine to a new location. The gods gave their blessing to the plan. However while the family was trying to get the geomancer to read the fengshui (spirits of wind and water) to determine the location of the new shrine, they went ahead with the building of the new wing, carefully placing the Tu Ti Kung in the room which occupied the place of the shrine.

Time passed, and the new location was not determined. More time passed; still no determination as to where to build the new shrine. Gradually, the project was forgotten. Tu Ti Kung did not get his new shrine. His very existence was forgotten.

When the old lady told the family of all this, they immediately went to a local geomancer and had him make a determination of where to build the new shrine. This time there was no

delay and the shrine was under construction.

As soon as the shell of the building was put up, with much pomp and ceremony, the 'old man' was brought out and put into his new 'house where he could look out on the growing fields.' The whole operation was such a success that very day marked a turn in the fortunes of the Su family.

As a concluding remark, I would suggest that the place-based connotations of *Tudi Gong*, distinguishing the stories presented in this last part, direct our attention to a further connotation to which I would refer as the 'positionality' of *Tudi Gong*. The role that He plays in the Taiwanese practice of everyday life seems to be dictated, it could be suggested, by the status (=position) which is popularly attributed to *Tudi Gong*. The main themes of these last four stories emphasise, in my view, that *Tudi Gong's* position, or His 'being positioned,' is

- a) one of *submission* (see first and second story), which locates *Tudi Gong* in a close/friendly relationship with people and very knowledgeable of the places in which He is sited;
- b) one of *witnessing* and *recording* the development of local histories (see third story) given His long standing temporal presence and stability in specific places. Since He is constantly *involved* in people's lives and activities, He carries the mark of the local place (see fourth story) and, finally,
- c) one of *directionality*, which may be attributed to the fact that the various *Tudi Gongs*, although they may be approached as a 'collective name' (see chapter four), are also represented as having 'individual personalities.' Directionality may also be extended to the widespread Chinese concern with geomancy (see fifth story).

By association, I feel that these connotations have the potential of raising a few speculations on the 'positionality' of anthropology and anthropologists. I will attempt to expand on this point in the conclusion of the thesis.

From stories to other representations of Tudi Gong

By focusing on four themes (that are '*Tudi Gong as a model of gongde*,' '*Policing the ghosts and association with the earth*,' '*The other face of Tudi Gong*' and '*Place and Tudi Gong*'), the stories introduced in this first part have expanded on some of *Tudi Gong* functions and connotations which have already been stressed in the previous chapter. They also have, I suppose, let the reader become further familiarised, in an entertaining manner, with a 'popular character' who, despite His low-level position in the Chinese religious pantheon - or probably because of this, has engendered an amount and variety of popular stories which no other 'Chinese' deity can equal.

My selection and speculative comments on these stories have, in my view, portrayed an image of *Tudi Gong* as an eclectic character, whose imagined power extends in various spheres of people's everyday life. People's representations of *Tudi Gong* through stories, in fact, are manifold and can refer, as I have discretely suggested, to opposing as well as complementary views about society, family relationships, fate, geomancy and conceptions of the supernatural, tension among generations or between the individual and the community. In addition, local characteristics of *Tudi Gong* have generated an overwhelming number of place-based stories which tell of specific local people, events and histories.

It must be pointed out, however, that while trying to comment on these stories, I felt that they would resist any conclusive definition and interpretation. Like the character from which they have originated, in fact, these stories are immediate and straightforward. In the same act of telling, listening, reading or writing them they convey, in a direct manner, representations of *Tudi Gong* as they have been experienced in the Taiwanese practice of everyday life.

By positing my own commentary on the margins and presenting in bold characters the several stories, I have attempted to let these stories tell their own tale. Stories, in fact, as I will suggest in the conclusion of this chapter, can be regarded as '*culturally creative acts*' (de Certeau) and as a legacy of the '*popular creative spirit*' (Gramsci) in specific contexts.

In this vein, the following part introduces a further and more diversified array of *Tudi Gong*'s representations. These extend from popular sayings, children's folk-rhymes and songs to representations in mass-media, games and collections/exhibitions, from iconographic portrayals to Taiwanese ways of worshipping *Tudi Gong*. By these means, I intend to propose that the multilocation and multilocation of *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan, which, inter alia, can be explained as a consequence of people's sense of attachment towards Him, have set in motion a process of appropriation and commodification of His image and of what He may represent for the Taiwanese. *Tudi Gong*, in other words, has become a popularised character. With this in mind, I invite the reader to examine the following fragments which, I feel, will give a unique and unprecedented insight into the cult and the character of *Tudi Gong* in today's Taiwan.

5.3 Other representations of Tudi Gong

Popular sayings, children's folk-rhymes and songs about Tudi Gong

Tudi Gong has given rise to a variegated plethora of popular sayings among the Taiwanese which further explain and clarify some of His functions and connotations. The theme of *Tudi Gong*'s multilocation, which people in Taiwan would exemplify with statements such as 'He is everywhere' (到處都有) or 'He is the most popular deity in Taiwan' (在台灣祂是最普遍的神), is often enriched with the sayings: 'At the beginning and end of each field there is a Tudi Gong' (田頭田尾土地公) and 'Every two or three steps, one can see a Tudi Gong temple' (三步兩步可見土地公廟). It has to be pointed out, however, that the agricultural connotation which is inscribed in the former saying, is less stressed nowadays especially because in the configuration of the city *Tudi Gong* temples do not delimit farmlands but neighbourhoods.

Feuchtwang (1992: 96) surveys the multilocation of *Tudi Gong*, 'the Locality God,' in the Taiwanese religious ideology by reporting the common sayings of two of his informants:

'I have heard that Tudi Gong is both the greatest and the smallest,' one woman explained. 'At the grave he guards just the grave. But he is also close to the God of Heaven reporting to him every three days.' And as a young miner said more flippantly, and in rhyme: 'God of heaven, god of earth; And under the bed, king of the pot.' (Thi: Kong, Te Kong, Bin-cng kha, Sai-thang-a Ong.).

The physical multilocation of *Tudi Gong* in Taiwan, which is shown in His widespread presence in the Taiwanese practice of everyday life, reflects the varied array of roles which He plays in the Chinese and Taiwanese religious worldviews. In the previous chapter, I have already introduced and analysed such a connection to a considerable degree. The two sayings above seem to emphasise that *Tudi Gong* is generally imagined and represented as a 'negotiator' between Heaven and Earth; *Tudi Gong*'s 'greatness and smallness,' which was also pointed out to me during my fieldwork, elaborate such a function by locating Him in a close relationship to the *God of Heaven*, at the top of the Chinese religious pantheon, as well as in a constant dialogue with people and their everyday affairs.

Another theme which can be associated with the above views refers to the intermingling of what I would call the 'global and local' features of *Tudi Gong*. For instance, His 'global' features, which extend both diachronically and synchronically in the Chinese context, do not seem to constrain and diminish His 'local' characteristics. I have already stressed in chapter four that *Tudi Gong* could be

approached as a 'collective name' whose functions and connotations seem to vary according to the location over which he presides and the territory he is protecting. *Tudi Gong's* temples, for example, seem to exhibit clear local characteristics and power to the extent that if there is more than one temple in a village *'the t'u ti at the east end is powerless at the west end'* (東頭的土地西頭不靈) (Smith 1979: 271) or as Chamberlayne reports *'if the God of the Soil of the east mountain goes to the west mountain he will not be efficacious'* (Chamberlayne 1966: 171).⁶ *Tudi Gong's* authority and efficaciousness are limited to the territory and the people He protects, thus the saying: *'the t'u ti of a village is efficacious only at home'* (當鄉土地當鄉靈) (Smith 1979: 271).

Despite His global features, *Tudi Gong's* status in the Chinese religious pantheon is considered very low. Smith (1979: 771) reports that

the original of the t'u ti is popularly supposed to have been Han Yü (韓愈) otherwise known as Han Wen Kung (韓文公)... That so great a man should have been degraded to such a trifling office as that of t'u ti is regarded as very unbecoming. Hence the couplet, 'Once a famous scholar of the T'ang Dynasty, but now only a local god in a village' (昔為唐朝進士第今作當莊土地神).

The agricultural connotation of *Tudi Gong* is emphasised in the saying: *'if you offend Tudi Gong, the chicken will not be fed'* (得失著土地公飼無雞 *Tek sit Thó tî kong, chhî bô ke*).⁷ Teacher Fang pointed out to me another meaning, that the Taiwanese usually attach to such a saying, which highlights the 'local policeman' function of *Tudi Gong*: *'You should not offend the local policemen, otherwise they will give you trouble if you are engaged in business.'*

In contemporary Taiwan, *Tudi Gong* is often represented as *Cai Shen*, the God of Wealth. In particular, people who are engaged in commerce and business would stress this function of *Tudi Gong*. Rohsenow (1986: # 95195)⁸ quotes an interesting simile which goes, *'the Earth God runs a bank; money opens the way to the gods'* (土地爺開銀行 錢通神路). During worship, I have often witnessed that *Tudi Gong* is presented with three kinds of paper money to be burnt.⁹ One kind is especially offered to Him, the other two, it was pointed out to me, *'will be used by Tudi Gong in*

⁶ Chamberlayne quotes C. H. Plopper 1926, *Chinese religion seen through the proverbs*, Shanghai, p. 32, proverb 121.

⁷ I report this saying with the Taiwanese romanization. The Chinese pronunciation substitutes 失 *shi* and 飼 *si* with, respectively, 罪 *zui* and 餵 *wei*.

⁸ Quoted in Gates (1987a: 259). Rohsenow, J. 1987. A Chinese-English dictionary of enigmatic folk similes (*Xiehouyu*), (unpublished).

⁹ Regarding the burning of money during worship, the reader can refer to Gates (1987a).

case he will need the help of other deities to grant our requests.'¹⁰

Apart from His association with business, commerce and money, here *Tudi Gong*'s low status in the Chinese religious pantheon re-emerges once again. The saying '*the t'u ti munching a cake, he cannot bear any large offering*' (土地爺吃餅餅擔不了大供獻)¹¹ portrays a *Tudi Gong* with 'limited power' and therefore not accustomed to sumptuous offerings. *Tudi Gong*'s help is also sought after by gamblers. Huang explains that,

to a very large extent, the earth god is regarded as an affable, benign old man, and one can bribe, cheat, or intimidate him when soliciting his supernatural power for help in obtaining illegitimate goals. Gamblers especially believe that one can make a deal with the earth god to obtain good fortune; indeed, a frequent winner in San-lin is often said to have made deals with the earth god (Huang Shu-Min 1981: 98).

Tudi Gong's proximity to his worshippers is expressed in the saying: '*Tudi Gong itches the sole of the foot*' (土地公癢腳底 *Thó·tī·kong ngiau kha té*)¹² which refers to the fact that *Tudi Gong* gives a mysterious premonition of events, especially those unpleasant, that will happen to people.

In a place where typhoons are very frequent and often destructive, the saying: '*Tudi Gong is not afraid of typhoons*' (土地公毋驚風颶 *Thó·tī·kong m̃ kiaⁿ hong-thai*), seems to indicate, in the words of some of my informants, the sense of stability through time and space of *Tudi Gong*. It also seems to stress, it was pointed out to me, the idea that no matter what the worshipper is going to tell or ask Him, *Tudi Gong* will remain 'cool, calm and collected' (unless approached by *Tudi Po*) and indeed do His best to grant people's requests of help. This saying is also often associated with 老神在在 *lāu sīn chāi chāi* which, it was pointed out to me, refers to the general view that deities have existed for a long time and, therefore, they contribute towards producing a sense of stability and continuity to their worshippers.

Tudi Gong as a friendly character, who is often made fun of, has also become the subject of two children folk-rhymes.¹³ The first

¹⁰ I have already pinpointed this practice in the previous chapter with regard to *Tudi Gong*'s mediatory connotations.

¹¹ See Smith (1979: 271-2). Here Smith points out that the word 'munching' is not *chi* 吃 but *lai*, for which there is no character.

¹² See Fang Nan-Qiang (1994: 181).

¹³ See Fang Nan-Qiang (1994: 173).

土地公伯仔	<i>Thó'tí kong peh á</i>	<i>Small uncle Tudi Gong</i>
杯仔捧走	<i>poe á phâng cháu</i>	<i>take away the small cup</i>
土地公伯仔	<i>Thó'tí kong peh á</i>	<i>small uncle Tudi Gong</i>
杯仔捧走	<i>poe á phâng cháu</i>	<i>take away the small cup.</i>

was sung by children in the countryside who, playing and swimming in the river, would, every now and then, have the need for a 'pee.' They would invite *Tudi Gong* to carry away the small cup with the urine, thus 'taunting' and 'offending' Him. The second rhyme describes the scene of a group of children playing together who would laugh at those cheeky ones who would join in without being invited:

土地公	<i>Thó'tí kong</i>	<i>Tudi Gong</i>
白目眉	<i>pèk bák bái</i>	<i>white-eyebrowed</i>
無人請	<i>bô lāng chhiá"</i>	<i>nobody invites Him (to come)</i>
家己來	<i>ka kī lāi</i>	<i>He comes by Himself.</i>

The white looking and benevolent *Tudi Gong* resembles one of those cheeky children who would Himself come to help, even though He has not been invited. Commenting on this saying, a friend of mine said that, '*Tudi Gong is like a good neighbour or friend. In time of need he/she will come to see you, though you have not invited him/her.*'¹⁴

Jian Shang-Ren (1992: *Tudi Gong Bo*) stresses that *Tudi Gong* is 'the deity who offers the greatest convenience to the people.' (最為便民之神). One feels free to ask anything of him, even children. The following song, in fact, presents the request of a man who, in his old age, has not abandoned the idea of getting married and having children:

土地公 土地伯 請你聽我說
'Uncle Tudi Gong, please listen to me,

弟子今年五十八 子孫無半個
this year I am fifty-eight years old, I have neither sons nor daughters, nor nephews and nieces,

好花來投枝 好子來出世
let me meet a nice woman so I can marry and have children,

¹⁴ Both children's folk rhymes were sung in Taiwanese.

紅龜三百二 闍雞五斤四

I will offer You three hundred and twenty turtles and a chicken more than three kilos in weight,

四果排到滿滿是 謝你亂彈布袋戲

an abundant variety of fruit, and I will arrange for You the performance of the Luan Tan and the Bu Dai Xi.'

Another song (Kang Yuan 1994: 85-7) follows the same request and pattern. The man, however, is thirty-eight years old and promises to offer *Tudi Gong* also pork and goat meat and a whole pig.

Popular sayings, children folk-rhymes and songs have offered another redolent set of popular representations of *Tudi Gong* which have further elaborated on His functions and connotations. The following part will introduce *Tudi Gong* as a 'popular character' who, in recent years, has often been on the centre of the Taiwanese mass-media stage.

Tudi Gong: 'the Taiwanese mass media's favourite deity'

In the early eighties, one of the three Taiwan's television corporations, the *Taiwan Television* (TTV, 台視) started to broadcast a programme which was called *Jinwutai* 金舞台. The programme, which continues to be shown every Sunday at twelve o'clock, soon became very popular on the island.

I still remember that *Ama* in *Yongxing* village, where I conducted part of my fieldwork, would remind me of it every Sunday. The main reason was that the first ten minutes are dedicated to *Tudi Gong* and His wife *Tudi Po*, presenting a variety of stories, anecdotes and facts of the Taiwanese everyday life. These have the purpose of inspiring, among people, 'feelings and deeds for the common good' (功德). This is the main conviction which, as they themselves stressed, has guided Mr. *Lai Yuan-Shan* 賴元山 and Mr. *Zheng Jia-Yi* 鄭甲一, in charge of the TTV programme, throughout these years.¹⁵

Mr. Lai, in fact, pointed out a Taiwanese saying which highlights the fact that if people use the name of *Tudi Gong* to gain personal profit, they will not be successful. Especially in the past, it

¹⁵ I am grateful to Mr. *Lai* and Mr. *Zheng* whom I met at the TTV studio for several hours on the 28th July 1995. They introduced me to the studio where the *Tudi Gong* programme is filmed and especially Mr. *Lai*, the author of the scripts, told me some of the ideas, stories and anecdotes which have inspired him and which have really happened to the actors involved with the *Tudi Gong* serial and to some of his acquaintances.

was common among Taiwanese, who were engaged in business and commerce, to name their shops and products after *Tudi Gong*. Thus, *Tudi Gong* restaurants or *Tudi Gong* animal feed, among others, are some examples of this phenomenon.

Although in Taiwan it is very popular to add the name of a deity to commodities, one has to be very careful when employing the name of *Tudi Gong*. Mr. Lai told me that

when we started to broadcast the Tudi Gong serial, some sad events happened to us: the actor who took the Tudi Gong part fell sick and had to go to hospital, while the actress who performed the Tudi Po part, died. Although we could not attribute this to a 'fault' in the two roles, we preferred to say that it all was an unreasonable coincidence.

The broadcast unit became a little scared: each time the actor and actress playing the roles of Tudi Gong and Tudi Po came to work, they would first go to the nearby Tudi Gong temple in order to explain to the deity that the performance's purpose was to propagate the name of Tudi Gong and not to gain personal fame and profit. I must admit that things went very smoothly in the following years.

During my stay in Taiwan, I came to realise that the relationship between people and gods seems to be based on the widespread concept that it has to be *mutually beneficial*. Local personages who contributed to the *common good* in the places where they lived were chosen as local *Tudi Gongs*. These have become metaphors for *gongde*: their example has to be followed and communicated. Acting against such folk beliefs, is widely felt to be an offence especially towards *Tudi Gong* and the 'community' itself and it is presumed to generate sickness and loss of wealth, as, acting according to them, is a source of 'good fortune' (福氣).

Mr. Lai told me a story which is connected with the *Qingye* 青葉, one of the most famous Taiwanese restaurants. When it was opened, business was not as good as today.

One day, the restaurant owner went to *Badouzi* 八斗子 and as it started to rain heavily, she took shelter in the local *Tudi Gong* temple. She saw that just outside the temple there were a few 'jars containing the bones of dead people' (骨缸). The restaurant owner, speaking to them, said that if they would protect her business, she would pay for the construction of a temple to protect them from the rain. The business went very well and the owner kept her promise by offering money for the construction of a *Youying Gong* 有應公 temple close to the *Tudi Gong* temple.

During the following years, the restaurant owner went back to the temple with a famous Taiwanese opera singer. They made a vow that the singer would perform in front of the temple. The promise, however, did not materialize.

A few weeks later, a fire which occurred at the main *Qingye* restaurant and at one of its branches

was blamed on this unfulfilled vow. Quickly, the restaurant owner took the Taiwanese opera singer to the temple to worship. The fire did not cause any substantial damage to the buildings nor to the business, which till today is flourishing.

Mr. Lai writes the serial scripts mainly inspired by the ideology which constitutes *Tudi Gong*'s stories, facts and anecdotes. The success of the serial is indeed connected to the fact that viewers recognise therein familiar themes of their everyday lives. At the same time, they recall and strengthen traditional values which have apparently lost their hold in modern Taiwanese society.

More recently, the TTV *Tudi Gong* serial has been coupled with another one. In October 1996, a few weeks after I arrived in Taiwan for a further period of fieldwork, a new daily serial on *Tudi Gong* started to be shown on *Chinese Television* (中視). Some of my friends, jokingly, associated my arrival with the serial, pointing out my 'good luck.'

Tudi Gong, however, is⁵ not only popular on television but also in newspapers and magazines. On the occasion of His double birthday¹⁶ or at the *weiya* 尾牙,¹⁷ at the Chinese New Year or at the Sweeping-Tomb Festival, an overwhelming number of articles appear on Taiwanese newspapers. These articles present to the reader functions and characteristics of *Tudi Gong* and also introduce His temples together with the places and communities where they are located. A further example which shows the strict link between *Tudi Gong* temples, places and communities.

On Tuesday, April 25th, 1995, the following headline and article appeared in the English language China News. The previous day the news had been reported by almost all the Taiwanese newspapers: it was an unprecedented case of extortion which was talked about, often the subject of jokes, for a few days on the island.

¹⁶ These occur on the second day of the second lunar month and on the fifteenth day of the eight lunar month.

¹⁷ The *Weiya* is celebrated on the sixteenth day of the twelve lunar month.

God of the Earth kidnapped, thieves demanding ransom

A man tried to extort NT\$ 500,000 from a Taoist temple in Tienmu by 'kidnapping' the God of the Earth, a local paper said yesterday.

A worker at the temple said the statue of 'land grandfather', a god responsible for maintaining peace and prosperity, was found missing last Friday. The robber left only the God's hat on the temple's table.

The Wufu temple, located on Hsingyi Road, then received a letter demanding money for the release of the deity, the employee told the paper.

'What is he (the kidnapper) gonna do, kill the god?' said the employee, who asked not to be identified.

The temple said it will not give in to the kidnapper's demand, even if the police cannot find the god. Instead, it plans to buy itself a new god. 'Hell, with NT\$ 500,000 we can buy 10 gods,' the employee said.

The employee said the statue, measuring 80 centimetres in height, has been in the temple for more than a decade and is known as the guardian of the nearby community.

A janitor said early morning last Friday, he discovered the statue was gone after he found the bolt of the wooden door had been removed.

Police said the robber probably had hidden himself under the sacrificial table when the wood door was still open.

FT9. Newspaper article: 'God of the Earth kidnapped, thieves demanding ransom'

Source: China News, April 25th 1995, Tuesday, page 3

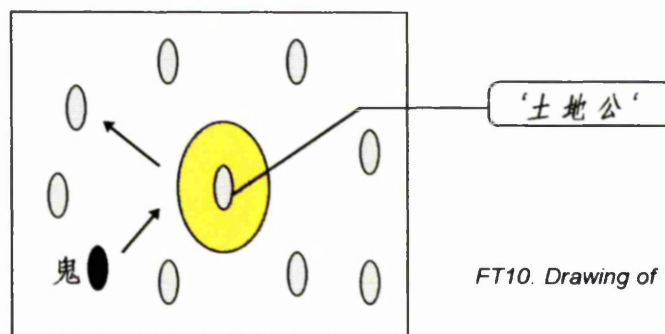
It has often happened that a *Tudi Gong* statue has been stolen from a temple hoping that it can grant to the thief a special blessing for an urgent need. Never, however, has a ransom been demanded. The Zongde Gong's *Tudi Gong*, for example, which is located in Zhongshan district **'has been stolen eight times over the last few years and has always been returned home'** the temple keeper told me. The kidnapped *Tudi Gong* returned home too after a few weeks and no ransom was paid. Once again *Tudi Gong* hit the headlines.

In the *Global Views Monthly* (遠見) magazine, the Customer Satisfaction Office Building (CS 商業大樓 CS) advertised its office building on the top of which a *Tudi Gong* statue had been placed. This, it is emphasized, would furnish the building's customers with a *'peaceful space in which to thank respectfully Heaven and Earth'* (在寧靜的空間敬天謝地). In two full pages, the advertisement portrays a smiling *Tudi Gong* face on its left side and a thoughtfully written explanation on its right side. Stressing *Tudi Gong* association with business and commerce and His protection for people engaged in these sectors, the company's choice of placing the statue on its building is described as a respect for *'tradition in the present'* (現代中的傳統) and as a result of the *'contemporary environmental protection consciousness'* (現代的環保意識).

Playing the Tudi Gong game

In the 1960s-70s, Taiwanese children, especially those living in the countryside, would often gather in front of the local *Tudi Gong* temple, in a courtyard or under a big tree to play the *Tudi Gong* game (土地公的遊戲). The rules were quite simple but the tactics of the game highlights some of the main functions which are attributed to *Tudi Gong*. The *Tudi Gong* game shows the extent of popularity of *Tudi Gong* in Taiwanese society and conveys a considerable degree of imaginative creation and recreation of popular Taiwanese cultural forms. These, I feel, have been inspired by *Tudi Gong* functions and connotations and the sense of attachment which continues to be felt towards Him.

Tudi Gong temples, it was explained to me by friends in their late twenties, are '**located in every village and a good part of our process of socialization during our childhood happened around those temples... Our parents would tell us stories about Tudi Gong, would teach us how to worship... They would even suggest to us the words to use when going to the Tudi temple ... The area around the Tudi Gong temple was often our play ground.**' It was then that several of my friends remembered the *Tudi Gong* game and explained how they used to play it.¹⁸ Firstly, through the 'finger-guessing game' (猜拳), the children would decide who would play the role of the *ghost* (鬼) whose duty was to touch or capture one of the players. The one caught would, then, become *gui*. In order to avoid having to play the *gui*, the child who was about to be captured would stop and say aloud: '**Tudi Gong**' while claspings both hands. The *gui*, therefore, could not then enter '*Tudi Gong*'s territory' and, consequently, had to try and catch another player.¹⁹



FT10. Drawing of Tudi Gong game

¹⁸ I have to say, however, that those who recalled the game had all spent their childhood in the countryside, especially in central and southern Taiwan. Those who had spent their childhood in *Taipei* either did not know anything about it or had only heard of it. In addition, it has to be stressed that there have been changes since that generation of children. Today, in fact, this game is still played but with another name: 紅綠燈 (*honglu deng*, lit. traffic-light).

¹⁹ The drawing and the systematic sequence of the game was related to me by Ms. *Tang Xin-Tian*.

With the exception of the child playing the *gui*, all the others participants could cry out '*Tudi Gong*' in order to protect themselves. However, at any one time, there could be only one *Tudi Gong* in the game.

The '*policing of the gui*' is certainly the main *Tudi Gong* function which is stressed in the game. As *Da-Zhou*, the youngest guardian of a *Tudi Gong* temple in *Datong* district told me, '*ghosts are afraid of approaching the vicinity of Tudi Gong temples*' (鬼不敢接近土地公廟附近). The game also portrays an 'imagined territory' or a 'sphere of protective power' which is under the surveillance of a *Tudi Gong*: no two *Tudi Gongs* are allowed to be in charge of the same territory.

There is another element that should be highlighted: this refers to the fact that *Tudi Gongs* are interchangeable. Local personages to whom specific *Tudi Gongs* refer, can be substituted - and have been substituted - by local communities in cases where their 'miraculous power' (*ling*) has diminished. In addition, *Tudi Gong* as a 'collective name', or as a 'concept-view,' which shares a considerable degree of communality among the 'Chinese,' has had manifold local variations through time and space.

Exhibiting, selling and collecting Tudi Gongs

It is not unusual to find a *Tudi Gong* statue in an art exhibition or sold as an antique. In December 1996, during the pottery art exhibition in *Yingge* 鶯歌 town in northern Taiwan, an artistic wooden statue of *Tudi Gong*, holding a stick in the form of a dragon, was on display. It was explained to me that the dragon in the hands of *Tudi Gong* is a very 'auspicious' (吉祥) image and that both *Tudi Gong* and the dragon are, in a certain sense, representative of Chinese culture.

The statue, however, was not for sale, unlike various '*Tudi Gong* antiques' I saw in several *Taipei's* shops. One of these shops, located on *Luosifu Road* 羅斯福路 in *Taipei*, displayed a wooden statue of *Tudi Gong* which was valued about 50,000 NTD (New Taiwanese Dollar), slightly more than one thousand pounds.

What I found interesting and surprising was the fact that *Tudi Gong* had become the subject of a statue collection in *Nantou* 南投 county.²⁰ Over the last few years, the famous pottery artist *Cai Rong-You* 蔡榮祐 has collected more than one hundred *Tudi Gong* statues which were presented

²⁰ This news was made public in an article which was published on the *Lianhe Bao* 聯合報, a leading Taiwanese newspaper, on the 17th October 1994. The information I present to the reader have been mainly taken and translated from this article.

to the public during an exhibition at the Cultural Centre of *Nantou* county from the 19th October to the 3rd December 1994.

In the article, *Cai Rong-You* explains that he has been fascinated by the differential representations of the statues and by the feeling that these inspire: '*Tudi Gong looks very friendly, He is like a gentle old man who lives just there, next door to you.*' One of the characteristics that the collector highlighted refers to the different form of mainland China's *Tudi Gongs* from the Taiwan's ones. He said that several of the former statues are very thin, while those from Taiwan are all quite corpulent. A Taiwanese friend of mine expressed the widespread view that '*a person who is a bit fat is believed to have more good luck*' (一個人有一點胖看起來比較有福氣).

Iconographic representations of Tudi Gong

Tudi Gong, who is generally represented as a '*jolly old man with white whiskers and rosy cheeks*' (Ahern 1973: 6), is easily identifiable among the overwhelming number of deities constituting the Chinese religious pantheon in Taiwan. Seated on a large chair, He wears the 'imperial prime minister's hat' (宰相帽) to strengthen his authority in case important people live on the territory he is supposed to protect (Lefeuve 1990: 1). Schipper, however, writes that '*most often he wears the yuan-wai-mao (員外帽, mao means hat) of the wealthy country gentleman, one who carries no official rank but great local influence*' (Schipper 1977: 660).

The degree of authority which the above different hats may indicate, led me to speculate, before my fieldwork in Taiwan, on the extent to which it would have been possible to detect whether '*a specific Tudi Gong's hat may tell us something more about the place he is protecting, the relationship of this with neighbouring places and what kind of people live on his land*' (Dell'Orto 1994: 50). Chamberlayne's (1966: 169) stress that there is a '*hierarchy of authority*' among *Tudi Gongs*, an assumption which has proven to be only partially accurate during my fieldwork, also encouraged my pursuing and expanding of the above line of investigation.

However, what I did manage to detect were another three kinds of hat that *Tudi Gongs* wear in Taiwan. The *shouzi mao* 壽字帽 is a hat on which the character *shou* is engraved and that is worn especially by *Tudi Gongs* located in business areas or to whose temple there is a considerable following of affluent business people. In some cases, the front side of the hat is embroidered with a diamond and the *Tudi Gong* robe is also embellished with the character *shou*. Some *Tudi Gongs* also wear the *wusha mao* 烏紗帽, a hat worn by official² in ancient China and that is now used as a synonym for a government post, or the *wujiang mao* 武將帽 worn by ranking military officials and the *jiangjun mao* 將軍帽, the general's hat.

These various hats did not seem to indicate a '*hierarchy of authority*' among the *Tudi Gongs* who wear them. An example of this is the hat worn by a *Tudi Gong* in *Datong* district. The temple keeper told me that a few years ago he visited *Fujian* province in mainland China. He saw a hat, a military one, which, he thought, would fit his temple's *Tudi Gong* very well. He bought it and while he was showing it to me, he sounded very proud of it.

In order to make one's temple *Tudi Gong* '*more handsome*' (比較好看) He may be displayed with new robes or hats, especially on the occasion of special celebrations. In contemporary Taiwan there is, I feel, a considerable degree of adjustment and creation/recreation of religious expressions which seem to resist 'fixed' formulations. While we may say that a specific *Tudi Gong* temple can enlighten us considerably about the place and the community in which it is sited, I do not think it can be posited in a '*hierarchy of authority*' with its neighbouring *Tudi Gong*. There is, as I have explained in the previous chapters, a large degree of autonomy among temples and, very often, *Tudi Gong* temples located in a locality, especially in the city, are not aware of each other.

Chamberlayne's assumption cannot be applied, therefore, either as a result of the '*hierarchy of hats*' which *Tudi Gongs* wear, or to the '*hierarchy of territories and communities*' that *Tudi Gongs* protect. In each territory or domain, be it temples and their communities, families, shops or tombs, *Tudi Gong* exhibit specific functions and connotations which, it seems, cannot be set on a hierarchical scale of authority. On this issue, Feuchtwang writes that,

the guardian of a large area and the guardian of a smaller area, the guardian of a neighbourhood and the guardian of a house were not neatly conceived as superior and inferior in a nested hierarchy of ever smaller territorial units. The one may be the guardian of a larger area than the other so that it encompasses it, but this relative size of command was conceived as relative strength of protective power rather than as a relation between two levels in the administrative hierarchy to which they are likened (Feuchtwang 1992: 96).

My informants agreed, however, that there could be a certain degree of *hierarchical authority* if we tackle the issue from another perspective, that of the various *Tudi Gongs*' efficaciousness and strength of their 'protective power' (靈).²¹ This does not necessarily coincide with the size of *Tudi Gongs*' protecting domains. A *Tudi Gong* who is considered to '*have more power*' (比較有靈) can take precedence over one's own community or family *Tudi Gong*. Thus a '*hierarchy of authority*' may be set according to the level of *ling* of known *Tudi Gongs*.

²¹ *Tudi Gong*'s status seems to be more a status acquired by popular 'acclaim' than a bureaucratic one or, in Weber's terms, a status based on 'charismatic authority.' This can wax or wane according to *Tudi Gong*'s efficaciousness and strength of His protective power.

It would be a flexible hierarchy, however, because it may be rearranged according to the performance of *Tudi Gong* miraculous power or with the introduction, by relatives and friends, of more powerful *Tudi Gongs*.

Tudi Gong is sometimes represented holding a 'walking stick' (拐杖) which is 'considered fit only for rural *T'u-ti-kung* 'who must do a lot of walking,' urban *T'u-ti-kung* being more sedentary' (Schipper 1977: 660). However, a *Tudi Gong* holding a stick can be, quite often, seen in the city of *Taipei*, for example. This may be due to the fact that the current territory a *Tudi Gong* holding a stick is protecting, was, in the past, an agricultural setting. It may also be, as it was pointed out to me, that people who have migrated from the countryside to the city, have brought with them a 'rural' *Tudi Gong* holding a stick. The *Tudi Gong* temple in the *New Park* in *Taipei* exhibits a *Tudi Gong* holding a stick. The statue was brought from the countryside place of origin of several workers who were employed in the construction of the park. With the park, they also built a *Tudi Gong* temple. A unique representation I have seen in Taiwan, depicts a *Tudi Gong* holding an umbrella: a further example of His association with agriculture and land and therefore water and fertility, or, as a friend jokingly stressed, with the continuous changing of Taiwan's weather.

Tudi Gong is also often depicted holding, in His right hand, the *ruyi* 如意, a kind of sceptre expressing good luck, and, in His left hand, the *yuanbao* 元寶, an odd-shaped silver or gold ingot formerly used as money. Very rarely, *Tudi Gong* also holds the *quanzhang* 權杖, a staff borne as a symbol of office and power.

In today's Taiwan, however, *Tudi Gongs* holding the *ruyi* and the *yuanbao* are the most common representations. The shift towards this was attributed, by several of my informants, to the ongoing changing configuration of Taiwanese society which in a few decades has moved from an agricultural society to a commercial and financial hub.

A piece of ceramics art by *Liu Zuo-Ni* 劉作泥 representing a happy *Tudi Gong* holding a fish in his hands²² certainly conveys the condition and main wish of contemporary Taiwanese: building a prosperous society in which everybody can enjoy abundance of wealth, and, therefore, happiness.

Tudi Gong's family: His wife, children and concubine

Very rarely, *Tudi Gong* is represented with his wife *Tudi Po*. The story I presented earlier has already highlighted the reason for such a lack of 'marital' co-presence. *Tudi Po's* desire to maintain

²² See the magazine *Ceramic Art* 陶藝 1995, 9, p. 94.

and reinforce a hierarchical distinction between rich and poor in society,²³ seems to make Her particularly worshipped by rich people and ignored by ordinary people, who would often describe her attitude as too 'stingy' (小氣).

Chamberlayne (1966: 173) points out that other images accompany *Tudi Gong* and his wife and are believed to complete the family: 'Very often, there is the figure of a boy - called *T'ung-nan* (the Boy) or *Chin-t'ung* (The Golden Boy), on the left hand side, whilst, on the right hand side, there is the figure of a girl - called *T'ung-neu* (the Girl) or *Yü-neu* (the Jade Girl).'

Drawing on China mainland's ethnographic studies at the beginning of the 19th century, Wolf introduces the concubine of *Tudi Gong*. Two explanations were given for this: firstly, it was reported that *Tudi Gong* won the lady by gambling, and, secondly, that He appeared to one of his villagers asking for a concubine as He was getting tired of his wife (Wolf 1974: 145). Although I did not come across any representation of Tu-di Gong's concubine in Taiwan, it would not be surprising to find that maybe she had a place in *Tudi Gong*'s temple in the past, if one agrees with Wolf's assumption that 'the resemblance between the gods and their human counterparts extends even into the realm of their personal life' (Wolf 1974: 145).

Tudi Gong's subordinates: Wenban, Wuban and the Tiger

On His right and left side, *Tudi Gong* is often accompanied by two 'subordinates' (部下). At the *Fuju Gong* in *Datong* district, where I noticed them for the first time, it was explained to me that they are named, respectively, *Jintong* 金童 and *Yintong* 銀童. Local people in *Yongxing* village say that the two subordinates in their *Tudi Gong* temple are *Wuban* 武班 and *Wenban* 文班 and at the *Baoan* temple in *Dalongtong* (Taipei) they are called *Wuzhuang Yuan* 武狀元 and *Wenzhuang Yuan* 文狀元.

Although with different names, these 'deities' seem to perform the same task: helping out *Tudi Gong* in His dealings in favour of the people He protects. I wonder, however, whether Chamberlayne's indication (above) of *Tudi Gong*'s two children, an isolated example which he grounds on mainland China ethnographic data, might have been misinterpreted or forcedly generalised if one compares the writer's 'findings' with Taiwan's widespread representations of the two deities as subordinates and not as *Tudi Gong*'s children.

²³ See also Schipper (1977: 661).

Tudi Gong is also represented with a 'tiger' (虎爺).²⁴ Usually sited on the floor under the temple's main altar, the tiger is offered uncooked food and it is represented either on its own or as a group: once, in a *Tudi Gong* temple, I noticed the statues of nine small tigers.²⁵

The association between *Tudi Gong* and the tiger is stated by Wei and Coutanceau (1976: 29) who write that *Tudi Gong* 'appears riding on the back of a tiger to show that he has the power to overcome evil.' Furthermore, an old Fukienese proverb says that 'without *Tudi Gong*'s command, no tiger bites a man' (土地公無靈號、虎不敢咬人)²⁶ thus clearly referring to *Tudi Gong* as the spirit who has the power to control the tiger living in a given locality. A friend told me that the tiger's main task is to carry *Tudi Gong* around in his many trips to help those who need his assistance.²⁷

Worshipping Tudi Gong

Although with possible local variations, the worship of *Tudi Gong* is generally performed on the first and fifteenth day of each lunar month by urban and rural families and communities, and on the second and the sixteenth day of each lunar month by business people. Taiwanese people appear to share the view that these are special days in which *Tudi Gong* pays particular attention to human affairs. In his study of *Sanxia* township, Weller writes that *Tudi Gong* is worshipped and receives offerings in front of the household or at His local temple:

the offerings include three sticks of incense, gold spirit money (hok kim and kua kim), and three kinds of cooked but uncut meat (sieng le). Afterwards, people set up a table at the

²⁴ It must be said that in Taiwan the tiger may be sometimes found also in association with other deities. It seems, however, more popular in *Tudi Gong* temples. Among the more than 150 *Tudi Gong* temples I visited, only four or five of them did not display the statue of the tiger.

²⁵ The tiger's connotations and functions are explained by Lefevre on the cover page of the *Dictionnaire Francais de la langue Chinoise*, published by the Institute Ricci-Kuangchi Press (Taipei-Paris) in 1976. To explain the 'Pien-hu, vase à vin plat, en bronze, de l'époque des Han' which portrays 'an immortal riding a tiger,' Lefevre writes that, 'the tiger is the prince of the mountain's animals... it is the animal in which there is the quintessence of the terrestrial vital principle. It signifies the Yin which causes the Yang's action. The tiger's dominance symbolizes the matrix of the terrestrial forces.' (my translation from French).

²⁶ See Zhuang Bo-He (1989: Hu Ye).

²⁷ Two Korean friends told me that in their country some temples have a statue of a tiger placed under the Mountain Spirit, who resembles the Chinese *Tudi Gong*.

door with its own candles and incense pot' (Weller 1987: 30).²⁸

The same arrangement is usually followed by shopkeepers and businesses people on the second and the sixteenth day of each lunar month. In *Taipei* city, I asked several shopkeepers and business people the reason why they would perform *Tudi Gong* worship on those days. The main explanation which was pointed out to me was that *Tudi Gong* seems to be too busy on the first and fifteenth and He would not take care of their businesses properly.

I still have not come across any explanation on when and why this 'business' tradition has originated. Could it be attributable to the relatively recent shift from agriculture to industry and commerce of Taiwanese society and to the fact that in Taiwan some people consider *Tudi Gong* as the *God of Wealth*? As already indicated in previous chapters, there is, in contemporary Taiwan, a widespread and growing association of *Tudi Gong* with the *God of Wealth*. Such an association was not even mentioned in a conference by Alexeiev in 1928, then published as a booklet entitled: *The Chinese gods of wealth*.²⁹ This trend, which might be more recent and it is probably a special feature of *Tudi Gong* cults in Taiwanese society, is expressed in an activity which, over the last few years, has become very popular in Taiwan especially in cities; this activity has been called: 向土地公借錢作生意賺大錢. After seeking permission, through *bubei* 卜盃, three times from *Tudi Gong*, if He agrees, the worshipper can borrow one thousand NTD from *Tudi Gong*, which will be returned in a larger sum if one's business has expanded.³⁰

Special celebrations are held in different places throughout Taiwan on the second day of the second lunar month, the *touya* 頭牙, on which the first *Tudi Gong*'s birthday is celebrated, and on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month, the *Tudi Gong*'s second birthday. This second birthday coincides with the Mid-Autumn Festival (中秋節). At the end of the harvesting season, in fact, farmers would thank *Tudi Gong* for having taken care of the agricultural production. Although this second birthday seems to be less emphasised by scholars of Taiwanese religion, it is still widely celebrated in Taiwan.

²⁸ Words in brackets are *Hokkien* words. Weller continues by pointing out that people then 'cut up and fully prepare the meat from the Earth God ritual, and offer it again accompanied by cooked rice. Most people explain that this portion of the ritual, called *kho kun* (rewarding the troops), is for the spirit soldiers who guard the town of Sanxia' (Weller 1987: 30).

Furthermore, the offerings are not always made of the three kinds of meat, or five kinds for special occasions. Often, '*a packet of chips, a few biscuits or some fruits can do*,' a young mother told me.

²⁹ See Alexeiev (1928).

³⁰ See, for example, the newspaper *Lianhe Bao* 聯合報 1997, March 11th, p. 14.

On these two occasions, for example, the majority of *Tudi Gong* temples in *Datong* district organise extensive and well prepared celebrations which, in the case of the *Puyuan Gong*, may last for over a month. The *Tudi Gong theatre* 土地公戲, opera performed in front of the temple 'to let *Tudi Gong* enjoy it' (給土地公看),³¹ is accompanied by several other activities, such as trips to other temples all over Taiwan or to township temples,³² offerings of whole pigs and chickens, or offerings of cakes in the shape of 'turtles' (烏龜), which are made of sticky rice, flour noodles or bean paste. Commenting on this last activity, Rohsenow (1973: 124-26) writes that,

*turtle cakes are not simply offered to the gods before being consumed by the buyer, as are most food offerings. They depend on and represent a faith in the continuity of local religious tradition. A person with a special favour to ask of the gods may place an incense stick on a cake left on the altar, burning it around so it faces outward, away from the god. After the opera performance he takes the cake home and eats it with his family. The next year, he has an obligation to return twice as much by number or weight as he took, and leave it on the altar for another one to claim.*³³

Tudi Gong is also worshipped on the sixteenth day of the twelfth lunar month, a day which is commonly known as *weiya* 尾牙. The whole ritual year, therefore, from the 'head' (*tou*) to the 'tail' (*wei*), is marked by *Tudi Gong* celebrations. Lefevre writes that the offerings to *Tudi Gong* are called 'dayaji 打牙祭, the ritual during which we make good use of our teeth for our meal, or simply zuoya 做牙, the performance of the ya ritual' (Lefevre 1990: 2). Large banquets, in fact, are prepared and offered on these days to honour *Tudi Gong*.

At the *touya* families burn *Tudi Gong*'s money, set off fire-crackers and also worship the 'lonely ghosts of the home.' Business owners must also invite their employees and it is becoming widespread in Taiwan to offer some performances on these occasions to entertain guests.

At the *weiya*, another big meal is offered to especially thank employees for their work. In connection with this, 'there is an interesting custom, on this night, for a boss who wishes to indicate that an employee is to be fired. He does this by placing a dish of chicken pieces on the table, with

³¹ As a recent phenomenon, in a few localities the opera performance has been superseded by or coupled with the *Qing Liang Xiu* 清涼秀, striptease show performances. See the newspaper *Ziyou Shibao* 自由時報 1996, March 2nd, p. 29.

³² A few *Tudi Gong* temple in *Datong* district have established 'twinsip' with *Tudi Gong* temples over the island.

³³ For a clear and concise explanation of the turtle or tortoise in 'Chinese' folklore and its association with tombs, see Thompson (1988: 105-6). In addition, the newspaper *Ziyou Shibao* 自由時報 1996, March 2nd, p. 29, in the article *Tudi Gong zuo shou* 土地公做壽, presents the 'turtle' activity in some Taiwanese localities.

the head pointing towards the doomed guest' (Wei & Coutanceau 1976: 124).

The following part introduces an interesting, though less frequent in today's Taiwan, way of worshipping *Tudi Gong* which particularly highlights the intermingling relationship which exists between territory, community and *Tudi Gong*. The performance and adaptation of this old popular tradition, the *Nong Tuzhi Gong* procession, is indicative of people's desire to maintain and reinforce local traditions and attachment to their 'place,' in spite of the ongoing social changes in contemporary Taiwan.

'Making Tudi Gong happy': the 弄土治公 *Nong Tuzhi* ³⁴ *Gong* procession

In chapter four I have already indicated that during temple processions, in which *Tudi Gong* is not the main deity, the temple's or a local *Tudi Gong* would guide the cortege. There are occasions, though becoming quite rare in contemporary Taiwan,³⁵ in which a *Tudi Gong* temple organises its own 'procession' (遶境). In these cases *Tudi Gong* is not accompanied by any other deity: He is carried around on the 'sedan chair' (神轎) through the territory He protects.

The *Nong Tuzhi Gong* celebration is usually held on the *yuanxiao jie* 元宵節, which corresponds to the fifteenth day of the first moon on the Chinese lunar calendar.³⁶ This day marks the end of the Chinese New Year's festivities and it is commonly known as the *xiao guonian* 小過年 or the Lantern Festival. In February 1995, I attended such a celebration in *Neihu* 內湖, one of the districts of *Taipei* city, at the *Fude* temple 福德祠, where such an activity has been held for more than one-hundred years.³⁷

The *Nong* of *Nong Tuzhi Gong* is used here in the sense of 'playing with'³⁸ *Tudi Gong*, or as I

³⁴ In association with this celebration, but not necessarily, *Tudi Gong* is also referred to as *Tuzhi Gong*, where the 治 *zhi* has the meaning of 'to administer, to control, to govern.' It may also refer to the seat of the local government.

³⁵ The main reason for this seems to be the amount of money which is needed to organise such processions. Not all *Tudi Gong* temples can afford such expenses, and if they can, some of them would employ the corresponding amount of money for social purposes, such as in the case of the *Wanhe Gong* (see chapter one), or they would hold the celebration every three or four years.

³⁶ This celebration is also known as *nong yuanxiao* 弄元宵. See Wu Ying-Tao (1992: 6).

³⁷ See also the newspaper *Lianhe Bao* 聯合報 1995, February 14th.

³⁸ In Taiwanese, the term '*ang*' is used.

was told 'to dance' with *Tudi Gong*.³⁹ In fact, the sedan chair on which the local *Tudi Gong*, made of stone, was seated and carefully fastened, was carried around by four young people dancing for almost four hours throughout the *Neihu li* 內湖里.⁴⁰

On the route, the sedan chair would stop in front of business shops⁴¹ whose owners had already prepared fire-crackers ready to be exploded under and around *Tudi Gong*. As fire-crackers represent wealth, riches and money, there seemed to be no limit that evening. It was said that in a few hours more than five hundred thousand NTD (500 萬元) worth of fire-crackers were exploded in *Neihu Li*,⁴² to wish the local businesses a prosperous year ahead.

By the end of the celebration, exploded fire-crackers carpeted the whole route of the procession. The custom of taking home a few of them represents a wish, it was explained to me, that the new year may bring 'luck in making money' (財運). People strongly believe in this custom to the extent that in a few hours there was almost no sign of fire-crackers on the streets, except the smell that was still impregnating the air. After 'washing' (洗淨) the statue, *Tudi Gong* was restored in the small temple which was full of all kind of food offerings.

By '*making Tudi Gong happy*,' though in an unorthodox manner, the people who attended the activity wanted to thank *Tudi Gong* for his protection and, at the same time, promote a sense of community and belonging in the neighbourhood through keeping and reinforcing local culture and folk religion. The presence of people from other localities did not seem to diminish the 'community consciousness' (社區意識) of itself. On the contrary, by presenting local activities to a wide public, the inhabitants of the local neighbourhood had a 'sound' as well as 'lively' opportunity to strengthen their attachment and belonging to their place and to stimulate other communities to follow their example. This activity, in fact, has been recently quoted in an article on the magazine *The Taipei Pictorial* ⁴³ which presents and encourages the building of 'new' local communities and a renewed 'sense, feeling, relationship and attachment between people and their places' (土地與人們的感情).

³⁹ Here 'dance' is used with the same sense which is attributed to the 'Dragon dance' (舞龍) or to the 'Lion dance' (舞獅).

⁴⁰ The procession started after a short worship at the local *Tudi Gong* temple (*Neihu Road*, Sect. 2, Lane 450) by the former and new *luzhujia* 爐主家.

⁴¹ Stopping at the various shops is called *yingnong* 迎弄: to welcome the *Nong Tuzhi Gong*.

⁴² In 1995, the amount corresponded to more than eleven thousand pounds (1 pound = 45 New Taiwanese Dollar).

⁴³ *The Taipei Pictorial* (台北畫刊) 1996, 340, 1st May, pp. 4-10.

Before engaging in a final discussion on this chapter, I wish to tell the reader that stories and representations of *Tudi Gong* can be never-ending and can hardly be captured in writing. The selection of and form(s) in which these fragments from 'popular tradition' on *Tudi Gong* have been presented in this chapter would like to reflect the fact that *stories*, like *places*, contain forces of their own which entice the teller, the listener and the writer into multiple - sometimes parallel, overlapping or contradictory - landscapes of meaning. *Stories*, like *places*, narrate the core of human experience; they are localised experiential creations which describe and question the very essence which characterises specific places and people's everyday life.

But *stories*, like *places*, can be ambiguous, they show and hide and while they tell, they can lie. That is why, probably, *stories*, like *places*, are so fascinating: they reflect, in many ways, the multilocation, multilocution and ambiguity of human experience and, consequently, they can be a privileged locus, for the anthropological endeavour, in understanding the fragmentations and confusions of life (Entrikin 1991).



P119. Tudi Gong with the 'ruyi' and the 'yuanbao'

北投區崇仁路一段2號 慈后宮外

Tudi Gong statue sited outside the Cihou Gong, a temple dedicated to Mazu

2 Chongren Road, Section 1

Beitou district, Taipei city

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Antique Tudi Gong statues
(Kindly provided by Mr. Lin Han-Chang)



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P123 - to - P128. Representations of Tudi Gong

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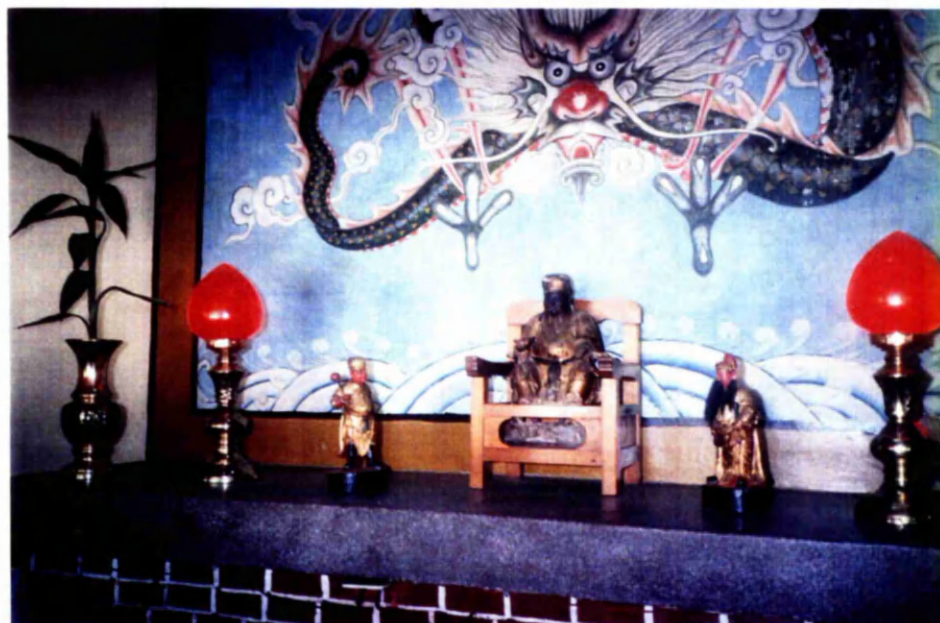
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P129. Tudi Gong and Tudi Po

P130

P130 - to - P132. Tudi Gong, Wenban and Wuban

P131
P132



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P133 - to - P136. Wuye, the Tiger at Tudi Gong temples in Taipei city



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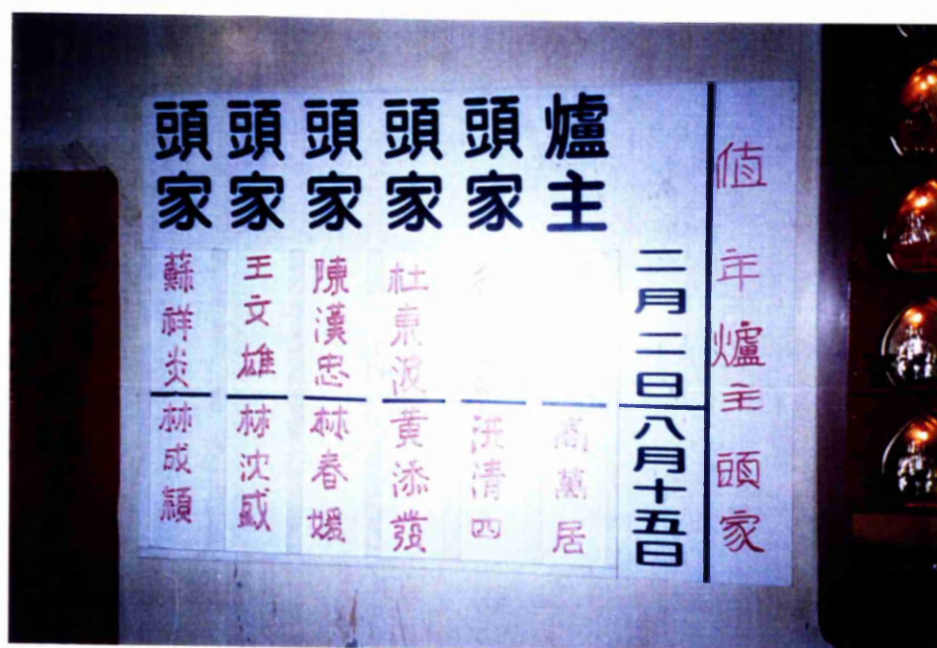
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P137 - to - P141. Worshipping Tudi Gong



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P141 - to - P145. The 'Nong Tuzhi Gong' procession in Neihu, Taipei city, February 1995



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5.4 Discussion

On places, stories and representations

A story 'describes'...but 'every description is more than a fixation,' it is 'a culturally creative act.' It even has distributive power and performative force (it does what it says) when an ensemble of circumstances is brought together. Then it founds spaces. Reciprocally, where stories are disappearing (or else are being reduced to museographical objects), there is a loss of space: deprived of narrations (as one sees it happen in both the city and the countryside), the group or the individual regresses toward the disquieting, fatalistic experience of a formless, indistinct, and nocturnal totality (de Certeau 1988: 123).

Stories and representations of *Tudi Gong* are very much part of Taiwanese popular tradition. As I have stressed in the first part of chapter four, *'the multilocation of Tudi Gong is, at the same time, His multilocation. Each place He is guarding has its stories to tell, and so the cult of this most ancient and popular Chinese deity lives on in the narratives of the people and places of contemporary Taiwan.'* There is, I suggest, an ongoing dialectical relationship between *Tudi Gongs*, *places and stories* which is generated by the multilocation, prevalence and popularity of *Tudi Gong* in the context of Taiwan and by people's senses of attachment to Him.

The link between stories and places is poetically captured in de Certeau's metaphor of *stories as metaphorai*, the vehicles of mass transportation in modern Athens (de Certeau 1988: 114). *Stories like metaphorai*, in fact, *'every day... traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them'* (de Certeau 1988: 114). In the same act of journeying, stories about *Tudi Gong*, both personal and collective, are continuously made and remade and echo the voices of the specific places He protects as well as ~~the~~ His various *functions and connotations*.

In this regard, one can speculate on the extent to which stories of people and places have 'magical power' in the same way that 'Chinese' deities have. Does the 'magical power' of stories 'wax and wane' as the 'magical power' of *Tudi Gong* or other Chinese deities? Can the disappearing of stories in specific rural and urban locales cause a 'sense of alienation,' a loss of a sense of place, community and identity?

If, as de Certeau stresses in the above quote, the 'distributive power' and 'performative force' of stories make these 'culturally creative acts,' the overwhelming variety of stories and fragments from popular tradition which I have presented in this part is indeed an indication of the vivaciousness of *Tudi Gong* in the context of contemporary Taiwan and it reflects, to a certain

degree, the 'magical power' that He still holds in people's everyday life and imagination.

Does the continuous making of representations and telling of stories about *Tudi Gong*, who 'stands for a sense of stability, of security, of identity with fixed and unmovable reference points of community and belonging' (Baker 1981: 1) also mirror people's acknowledgement of and their resistance to a diminishing sense of place, community and identity in contemporary Taiwan? To what extent are these fragments on *Tudi Gong* able to indicate 'cultural traditions and parameters,' their significance, modification or invention in the context of Taiwan's rapid and radical social change?⁴⁴

On 'popular tradition' and *Tudi Gong*

In December 1989, Zhuang Hua-Tang 莊華堂 won the *Zhong Yang Newspaper Literature Prize* (中央日報文學獎) by presenting to the Taiwanese public the short story 土地公廟 *Tudi Gong Miao*. The following year, *Tudi Gong Miao* was published in a collection of eight short stories by the same author.

The short story *Tudi Gong Miao*, which gives the title to the collection,⁴⁵ depicts some scenes of the everyday life of a Taiwanese village and narrates the sense of attachment of one of its villagers to his farmland and to the local *Tudi Gong*. *Akun Bo* 阿坤伯, the main protagonist of the story, shows his respect to *Tudi Gong* by taking good care of his land and by resisting the pressure of other farmers who want to persuade him to sell his land to the nearby factory.

Akun Bo does not give in. On the contrary, he curses his fellow villagers: 'You have sold all your farmland and you still have the boldness to continue to worship *Tudi Gong*!' In this regard, the author stresses that land, which is protected by *Tudi Gong*, cannot be sold, as it is the source of life and, at the same time, the link with one's own ancestors. There is no way that *Akun* could be persuaded. Throughout the short story, his attachment to the land is transformed in resistance to the changes that industrialisation would cause.

Akun's desire to build a new *Tudi Gong* temple seems to stress the need for a fixed reference point in the flux of a social transformation which could diminish or eradicate Taiwanese traditional senses and values. Does *Akun's* attitude also represent an attempt to maintain and revitalise a sense of community and identity which, through his attachment to *Tudi Gong* and the land, he sees as a legacy of the traditions of his ancestors?

⁴⁴ I will deal with these questions in the following chapter.

⁴⁵ Zhuang, Hua-Tang 莊華堂 1990. 土地公廟. 台北: 聯經.

I wish to elaborate on these questions by introducing the Sardinian notion of '*su connotu*' (lit. what is known), which has been investigated by Zene in a concerted study of *Gift and community. S'imbiatu: the sending of the gift in North-Central Sardinia*.⁴⁶ This notion, I feel, expresses the close relationship which exists between land/place and local popular traditions and values. Zene (forthcoming: 12) stresses that '*su connotu*,'

*a noun derived from the past-participle of the infinitive **connoskere** (to know), indicates **what is known** not only in terms of relevant material possessions of the family such as houses, land, estate and herds, but also **what is known** in terms of traditions, customs, practices, customary laws, ideals and objectives as these have been transmitted by **sos mannos**, the long, unwritten and orally transmitted series of ancestors... **su connotu** accomodates a variety of **possessions** held, on expanding circles, by a family, a group of related families ('clan'), an entire village, a sub-region or even a great part of Sardinia itself.*

With regard to the family, a group of families or the community itself, Zene continues by saying that '*su connotu*'

*could be defined as the ancestor's **gift** to their descendants, a legacy of moral qualities and material possessions which form a unity in the minds of people, thus incorporating both **heritage** and **inheritance**, and which are separated only for practical purposes. In this sense, **su connotu** is what survives of the ancestors (**sos mannos**) who brought name and status to the **erentzia** (family name).*

This view of '*su connotu*,' highlights the fact that 'what is known' is not a pure and intellectual knowledge, but it is socially constructed and locally experienced in individuals', families' and communities' practices of everyday life. '*Su connotu*' *'should not only be kept and protected, but increased and handed down to others in a better state than when it was received, almost as if it should develop as a person, or as the **soul** which personifies the group. To touch, misuse, steal or offend **su connotu** (both in its abstract sense of 'tradition' and in the concrete sense of possessions) is a direct action against the person and the group.* (Zene, forthcoming: 13).

In other words, as Lin Mei-Rong (1992a: 171-6) stresses for the Taiwan case, tradition is not in opposition to the modern, is not something of the past, is not a static system of reference, is not generated from the top. Tradition, I would add, is continuously re-invented at the grassroots of

⁴⁶ My thanks to Cosimo Zene for providing me with a draft copy of his book and for several discussions we had on various topics connected with this thesis.

specific social contexts, as the result of what Gramsci would address as the '*popular creative spirit*' (Holub 1992: 54-6). Gramsci's admiration for the potentials of popular culture, in fact, is founded in his view that '*social change could come from the simple - 'all men are **philosophers**, as he said' - and that the everyday, the popular, was the terrain upon which negotiation, compromise and resistance could be carried out*' (Warren 1993: 177).⁴⁷

I am inclined to view the cult of *Tudi Gong* as an aspect of the Taiwanese '*connotu*' and the stories and representations originated from *Tudi Gong*'s image as an ongoing exemplification, in a discursive, visual and performative manner, of people's attachment to and popularity of *Tudi Gong* in the context of Taiwanese society. The ethnographic material presented in this chapter has, I feel, related to the reader the vivacity, in a Gramscian sense, of the Taiwanese '*popular creative spirit*' and indicated the characteristics of a deity who has the capacity of keeping alive and re-invigorating specific cultural traditions and local practices among the Taiwanese.

In the next chapter, I will attempt to examine the extent to which 'Chinese' cultural traditions and parameters, especially those connected with the cult of *Tudi Gong*, have been practised and have been felt to have retained significance for the people of Taiwan, even if, as I will indicate, subject to modification and invention. In addition, I will speculate, from the perspective of place and *Tudi Gong*, on some debates which have been discussed in the context of Chinese religions for some time now.

⁴⁷ Warren quotes Bennet, T., Martin, G., Mercer, C. and Woollacott, J. (eds) *Culture, ideology and social process*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 200-1.

Chapter Six

Tudi Gong: changing senses of place, community and identity

6.1 Introduction

6.2 The logic(s) of localised practices and representations of Tudi Gong: exploring 'cultural traditions and parameters'

6.3 Positioning Tudi Gong in the context of Chinese religions

6.4 Summary

6.1 Introduction

This chapter proceeds with the assumption that 'popular religion' in Taiwan can best be understood by: a) trying to locate it in the way people experience it in the practice of everyday life, and b) by focusing on the senses that people have of their place, including their place in the narratives and development of personal and community-localised histories and practices. Senses of attachment towards *Tudi Gong* and interpretations and representations of His cult may vary for different people (Wolf 1974) and they may also be variously felt or explained as individual, family and community social conditions change (Weller 1987). *Tudi Gong*'s functions and connotations can be exemplified according to the locations over which He presides and the territories He is protecting (see chapter four) and in the vast array of personal and communal stories and representations locally constructed in the narratives of people and places of contemporary Taiwan (see chapter five).

In this chapter, I intend to elaborate, in a speculative manner, on a set of questions which seem to have the potential to further highlight the intertwined relationship between *place* and *Tudi Gong*. In the process of 'ethnographizing' *Tudi Gong*, in fact, His multilocation and multilocation in Taiwan and, more generally, in any Chinese context, led me to consider whether His representations, especially those of *spy* and *recorder* of the most important events occurring in the community He is protecting (see chapter four), could also include that of monitoring the changing senses of place, community and identity occurring in contemporary Taiwan. What 'cultural traditions and parameters' have His stories and representations (see chapter five) been able to indicate? To what 'logics,' if any, do localised practices and representations of *Tudi Gong* refer?

In this vein, the first part of this chapter will speculate on whether (and, if so, how) the relative valencies of various 'Chinese' cultural traditions and parameters, which in my view are particularly associated with *Tudi Gong* cults, have been strategically adopted and/or manipulated in a context of rapid and radical social change such as Taiwan.

At the same time, I have engaged in a consideration of the ways in which my study on *Tudi Gong* could contribute towards positing and re-positioning Chinese folk religion as a place-based phenomenon which can affect and be affected by social changes occurring in specific settings. The context of Taiwan, in fact, seems to offer various insights for this kind of analysis, given its grassroots intermingling of religion and society. The second part of this chapter, therefore, will focus particularly on a preliminary re-positioning of 'topo-centric' issues which have informed the debate on and representations of Chinese religions especially in the western academic arena.

The sophistication and vitality through which social changes have occurred in Taiwan over the last few decades, and especially since the abolition of martial law in 1987 and the demise of authoritarian single-party state control, have been impressive. These changes have affected the way people sense (their) place, (their) community, (their) identity, (their) nationality, (their) religion and (their) sense of themselves.

In this context, anthropologists of Chinese religions in the context of Taiwan have to 'keep up' with the celerity of these social changes.¹ The latest phase of Taiwan history since 1987 appears to be an important sampling ground and an extremely stimulating and interesting time for anthropological analyses of religion with special reference to folk religion.

However, foreign and local anthropologists of Taiwanese society are painfully aware that the attempt to 'capture' and 'fix' these social changes in ethnographic research and writing is an extremely arduous and thwarting task. In this regard, the 'impressionistic' style I have employed in writing this chapter is, I suggest, the result of both a necessity and a conviction. I feel, in fact, that an exploration of the fluidity, rapidity and fragmentation of social changes versus the relative continuity of cultural traditions in the context of Taiwan only allows one to perceive and momentarily fix, in a specific time and place, the dialectical and ever-changing interaction of tradition and social change. In addition, as Jordan (1994: 137) comments with reference to the study of religion in post-war Taiwan,

surprisingly little of the research on religion in Taiwan has focused specifically on its ongoing transformation as such. Most of us have examined religion either from a more or less static functionalist standpoint or from a folkloric and antiquarian one that hopes to see in contemporary practice features that would help us to reconstruct earlier traditions as well. Some researches have considered religious change (or even religious practice in general) as a 'social problem' in need of 'improvement,' echoing official concerns about the rationalization of religious practice.

The recent shift of anthropological studies of religion in Taiwanese society substantially weakens Jordan's comments. Zhang Xun (1996) in an extensive review of anthropological studies of *Han*

¹ In this regard, it is interesting to note that the field-works from which the most important studies on religion in contemporary Taiwan have been published and which have tended to 'direct' and 'inspire' subsequent works, were almost all conducted before 1987. In addition, with reference to Taiwan, just before 1987 Hill Gates commented that 'where we can do fieldwork, our researches are constrained by tight governmental limits on the pursuit of topics that might undermine national policy. Where we cannot do fieldwork, we can do anthropology only to the safely dead' (Gates 1987b: 240). Since 1987, the year which saw the abolition of martial law, local and foreign scholars have felt encouraged to research on a variety of topics which embrace political science, anthropology, economics, history and humanities (see *Free China Review* 1994: 11-2). This is a striking change in the anthropological discipline, the implication of which would be interesting to investigate.

Chinese religion in Taiwan, 1945-1995, discerns five stages which also refer to different approaches to the study of religion on the island.

Firstly the ethnographical surveys which were done during the Japanese period (1895-1945); secondly, evolutionary and diffusionist studies of ancient Chinese religion (1945-1965); thirdly, structural-functionalist studies of ancestor worship and territorial cults (1965-1983) followed by symbolic and structural-functionalist studies of the *Mazu* cult and its pilgrimages (1983-1993). Finally, she notices a recent shift (1993-1995) which is moving towards the study of ritual process, gender, identity, and, increasingly, interdisciplinary studies.²

This last phase, still in its infancy but with remarkable potential, given its rapid development over the last few years, will be, I feel, the ground from which new and substantial contributions may be given to the newly established *Taiwan studies* and, more generally, to the very core of anthropological theory and practice. Ambitiously, my own study on *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan can be positioned in Zhang Xun's last phase. The innovative perspective that I have been proposing since 1993 and which I presented in my research report (Dell'Orto 1994) identifies '*Tudi Gong cults*' and '*place and senses of place*' as valuable terrains of investigation which, hopefully, may indicate a further trajectory through which anthropology can approach and discuss Taiwanese popular religion and society.

² For a more detailed presentation of the five trajectories in the study of religion in Taiwan, the reader may refer to the article by Zhang Xun (1996) in which she attempts to position more than three hundred works mainly written by Taiwanese anthropologists.

6.2 The logic(s) of localised practices and representations of Tudi Gong: exploring 'cultural traditions and parameters'

Temples of, and the localised practices and representations associated with *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan seem to be, in my view, logically related to people's attempts to create and re-create a sense of themselves and their own identity, a desire for nurturing a sense of community and association, a sense of 'fixity' in the flux of social changes which have the potential, so I was told, to diminish one's own sense of identity and belonging. Commenting on Dundes's view³ that place-based identity is a relative matter, Ryden writes that

people simultaneously feel they belong to many concentric places, ranging from a continent or country down to a particular house in a particular neighbourhood of a particular city. This sense of identity becomes stronger the closer we get to the center of this ring of concentric places (Ryden 1993: 65).

In this regard, from consideration of my own experience in Taiwan I would venture that *Tudi Gong* cults were generally explained in spatial and temporal perspectives which would intertwine in the personal or communal narratives of people and places. When asked about the cult of *Tudi Gong*, the majority of people with whom I was interacting in *Taipei* would answer by attempting to connect, in different ways and to different degrees, what I will call **multiple spatial senses**.

A first sense would normally refer to their closest locale, as a setting of social interactions, and explained in terms such as: **'There is a shrine dedicated to Tudi Gong in my neighbourhood. My family worship Tudi Gong in that place.'** This first spatial sense would be enlarged by mentioning, when known, neighbouring temples and communities as well as hometowns in Taiwan - if the person had migrated to *Taipei* - and the temples and kind of worship performed there to celebrate *Tudi Gong*.

In several cases references were made to places of origin in China mainland recently visited, through an account of the revival of ritual practices associated with *Tudi Gong* and other local deities.⁴ Despite the high degree of social mobility among the Taiwanese, it seems that the thread between these places has never been completely broken. It has been created, re-created and imagined in different ways through time in the everyday lives of the people living on Taiwan thus

³ See Dundes, A. 1989. Defining identity through folklore. In his *Folklore matters*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2, 13.

⁴ See also Dean (1989).

often generating multiple and differential, sometimes confusing, senses of belonging and attachment. A survey conducted by the Democratic Progressive Party's Election Strategy Commission in 1995 found that '29 percent of those interviewed call themselves Taiwanese, while another 35 percent refer to themselves as Chinese. About 27 percent said they thought of themselves as both Taiwanese and Chinese and six percent said they were unsure.'⁵ This verbal divide in expressing one's own 'national' identification is indicative, in the views of several of my raconteurs, of a frequent overlapping and variable intensity of senses of belonging and attachment. Harrell suggests that

an increasing number of people in Taiwan, while acknowledging the Chinese origin of the cultures and languages of that island, are beginning to identify themselves with a Taiwanese nation, rejecting not the content but the hegemonic value of the patrilineal narrative of unfolding, even as they visit their own relatives in Fujian and Guangdong provinces (Harrell 1996: 8-9),

and commenting on Hai Ren's paper in the same volume (Hai Ren 1996: 75-97), Harrell stresses that

these people are trying to replace the genealogical narratives of unfolding with a geographical narrative of an unfolding of an island through its experience as a place of invasion and resettlement, a victim of five centuries' colonialism, and a pioneer first of economic development and now with free speech and democracy in East Asia (Harrell 1996: 9).

These spatial narratives and perspectives are coupled, I noticed, with temporal ones in the very telling of stories about *Tudi Gong*. I suggest that **multiple temporal senses** would best describe the senses of place, community and identity that people experience in their personal and communal narratives and the extent to which these have been affected by, as well as affecting, processes of social change. The majority of people with whom I discussed *Tudi Gong* cults would normally tell stories about Him involving a substantial degree of variation depending on their place of origin, what they remembered of stories heard from others, and, especially, personal, family and community circumstances in which help from *Tudi Gong* had been sought at different times as well as places in their lives. Ryden continues by stressing that

⁵ This information was reported in the local newspaper *China News*, May 14th, 1995, 3. On related issues, see also Gold (1994).

in recounting stories of local history, people recount and reaffirm who they are. This also holds true for the more personal, intimate kind of history: I define myself through my own history, I am the product of what I do, and in contemplating and discussing where I did it I contemplate and discuss myself.

People can also be defined and labelled, identified to themselves and others, in terms of the simple physical components of a place: geography in a sense can, by providing a particular arena for action and set of materials to work with, strongly influence local and individual identity (Ryden 1993: 65-6).

In the same telling of personal and shared narratives of places and memories of the past, *Tudi Gong*, with His cult, temples and stories, seems to vitalise and make sense of places and local histories, thus generating a process of re-affirmation and/or re-invention of a sense of place-based identity in a rapidly changing society.

As intertwined parameters of 'identity,' various spatial and temporal degrees of 'attachment(s)' have the potential of resisting 'alienation,' a state exemplified, one may speculate, by 'ghosts' who are 'unattached' both temporally and spatially. The sayings, '*don't forget your roots*' (不忘本) or as *Lai guzhang* and several other raconteurs would often tell me '*I just believe in what my ancestors believed in*' (我的祖先信什麼，我就信什麼) seem to convey and nurture a sense of belonging and continuity of place-based religious and cultural traditions and practices which, at a local level, is often associated with *Tudi Gong* temples and cults.

In the next section, the reader will be presented with a summary geographical and historical positioning of Taiwan. These events of the past, often re-counted and re-positioned among the people of Taiwan (Hai Ren 1996) should contribute towards an exploration of those 'cultural traditions and parameters' often associated with *Tudi Gong*.

Taiwan, 'a society on the move'⁶

*As 'a butterfly emerging from a cocoon and stretching its wings, the Republic of China on Taiwan is starting to show its colors.'*⁷ This local metaphor of Taiwan seems to be an appropriate one for conveying the full-scale metamorphosis that Taiwan has experienced over the last few decades. The metaphor, however, also gives the idea of evolving change, generated, in the case of Taiwan,

⁶ See Greenhalgh (1984: 529).

⁷ *The Free China Journal*, December 24th, 1993, vol. X, no. 72, p. 8.

by rapid and radical social, economic - and lately political - transformations.⁸ The positive and negative consequences of social change have been highlighted by both western and Chinese scholars and, during my fieldwork, frequently highlighted by ordinary people when they commented: *'Taiwan has changed too quickly!'* Social changes, however, do not occur as 'quickly' as the people perceive; instead they are constantly present and reworked through space and time. To understand the changes experienced by the people, one has to keep in mind the tumultuous history of Taiwan.

With Japan to its North, the Philippines to its Southwest and mainland China 160 kilometres (100 miles) to its Southeast, Taiwan's geo-strategic position has long lured - and, to some extent, still lures - the imagination of Chinese dynasties, colonial powers and immigrants from mainland China. Greenhalgh pointed out that *'from the beginning Taiwan was a society on the move'* (Greenhalgh 1984: 529) whose communities' and island's boundaries have been drawn and re-drawn in the various attempts to subjugate it.

Despite some sporadic migrations from mainland China as early as the third century A.D. and during the *Sui* Dynasty (A.D. 581-618), there was no consistent influx of Chinese settlers across the strait until the 17th century. These 17th century immigrants came mainly from southern *Fujian* and eastern *Guangdong*. Thompson wrote that *'all settlers were Han Chinese, but there were distinct sub-ethnic differences. Those from Fujian, who constituted 82 per cent of pre-1895 immigrants, speak the Hokkien dialect, while those from eastern Guangdong (16 per cent of pre-1895 settlers), speak Hakka. The two dialects are mutually unintelligible. The two groups also differ somewhat in terms of cuisine, dress and affiliation to particular deities; but their similarities should also be noted, for they share the same traditions, beliefs and forms of social organization'* (Thompson 1984: 554).

The *Fujianese* migrated to Taiwan predominantly from two districts of Southern *Fujian*: *Zhangzhou* and *Quanzhou*. The settlement patterns in Taiwan were influenced by the frequent fights over land and water resources which occurred between these two groups, local aborigines and *Hakka* people (Thompson 1984: 555; Lamley 1981). Today's 250,000 or so remaining aborigines are divided into nine tribes and speak languages of the Malayo-Polynesian variety. They have either been pushed into the mountains or have had to move to the less fertile land of eastern Taiwan, thus maintaining some degree of independence from the Chinese settlers,⁹ or have undergone a process of 'sinicization' through which they were relatively 'absorbed' by the *Han*

⁸ In this regard, Tsai describes modernisation as a *'process which involves transformation of all systems by which people organize society, i. e., the psychological, social, economic, intellectual, religious, and political systems'* (Tsai 1989: 79).

⁹ For a good, brief history of Taiwan's aborigines, one can look at Wang I-Shou 1980. Cultural contact and the migration of Taiwan's aborigines: a historical perspective. In *China's island frontier: studies in the historical geography of Taiwan* (ed.) Ronald G. Knapp. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.

settlers (Saso 1982: 16). The *Hakka*, whose communities usually allied with each other, managed to occupy a few, often 'betwixt and between,' areas on the island.

Taiwan has also witnessed the penetration of foreign powers committed to develop trade in East Asia. In 1622, Dutch forces captured the Pescadores islands and then evacuated them in 1624 to set up near *Tainan* after an agreement with the Chinese government. In 1626, the Spanish seized the city of *Jilong* and expanded their control over northern Taiwan. In 1642, however, the Dutch managed to take major Spanish settlements thus consolidating their control over the island.

Consequential changes were also occurring across the Taiwan strait. In 1644, the *Ming* dynasty was overthrown by the *Manchus* and a *Ming* general *Zheng Cheng-Gong* (commonly known in the West as *Koxinga*) fled to Taiwan. After having fought against the Dutch (1661), *Zheng Cheng-Gong* died shortly thereafter. In his short-lived rule of the island, *Zheng* 'encouraged Chinese across the Taiwan strait to come to Taiwan, setting in motion immigration that soon brought a significant increase in the Chinese population of Taiwan, which provided manpower for Cheng's [Zheng] army. Fearing that Cheng might land forces on the mainland the Manchu government forced the evacuation of coastal areas, depriving many of their livelihood and thus forcing many more to leave for Taiwan. Cheng Ch'eng-kung [Zheng Cheng-Gong] promoted foreign trade with Japan, the Philippines, Indochina, Siam, and the East Indies. Taiwan's ports became busy and its population cosmopolitan' (Copper 1993: 10).

The *Manchus*, who in the meantime had established the *Qing* dynasty on the continent (1644-1911), eventually took control over the island in 1683 and ruled it as a frontier district without however regarding it as part of China. In the early 1880s, fearing foreign threats to occupy Taiwan, the *Manchus* decided to send more competent officials to the island. The governor *Liu Ming-Quan* succeeded in improving life on this frontier district and raised, somehow, the degree of trust among the Taiwanese towards the mainland government. These 'warmer' relations led to the 1886 declaration in which Taiwan was recognised as a separate Chinese province. This agreement, however, did not last long.

With the treaty of *Shimonoseki* at the end of the Sino-Japanese war, Taiwan and the Pescadores islands were ceded to Japan, which began its fifty-year long colonial rule in 1895. Various uprisings exploded on the island during the occupation which were, in turn, promptly controlled by the Japanese. It must be said, however, that in this period the island attained a considerable level of development in several aspects of life making it fertile ground for the process of industrialisation which occurred in the 1950s (Sutter 1988: 6-7). As Kiang stressed, '*the history of Taiwan's modern era began from the Japanese period. ... In the course of 50 years of Japanese rule, the island had been developed into a modern country, laying a good foundation in education, health, industry, communication, and transportation. Clearly the lot of the average Taiwanese improved. Although the Taiwanese had been barred from significant positions in the government, the Japanese administration earned a considerable degree of respect. With a combination of police force and*

political guile, the Japanese imposed law and order and penetrated every town and village with an efficient and effective structure of management' (Kiang 1992: 150-1).

In 1945, at the end of World War II, Taiwan was returned to China. Various stories I was told regarding that period seem to suggest that the Taiwanese exhibited different feelings about their 'return to the Motherland.' Some felt a sense of liberation from the Japanese colonial rule which, although having raised the Taiwanese quality of life, had also considerably restrained local language and culture; others were more wary and doubted that the 'Motherland' would be able to continue and advance the social changes which had been inaugurated by the Japanese. The Nationalist Chinese officials (*Guomindang*, *GMD*) took control over Taiwan on 25th October 1945 and *Chen-Yi* became the governor of the island. During the following two years, corrupt and inefficient 'mainlander' officials and soldiers, more interested in the fight against the spreading of communism in China than to the governance of the island, generated widespread social turmoil. This culminated in 1947, in the February 28th Incident (*Er Er Ba*) in which a woman was killed by *GMD* agents for selling black market cigarettes in the streets of *Gaoxiong* in southern Taiwan. Immediately, the Taiwanese revolution against the mainland Chinese spread from Taipei throughout the whole island. In this regard, Hai Ren writes that

when about eight thousand people including [~]large number of local intellectuals and elites were massacred by the *GMD* government in a few days following the February 28 Incident(s) (*Er Er Ba*) of 1947, the Taiwanese as (a) national figure was born (Hai Ren 1996: 90).

Hostility between the two sides of the straits, and between 'mainlanders' and 'Taiwanese' on the island, reached a high point in the ensuing months during which more than 30,000 Taiwanese were massacred by the *GMD* government - a fact only recently documented and made public (Copper 1993:52).

In the years after 1949, Taiwan once again became the theatre of further uprisings against the Chinese Nationalists who had taken power in Taiwan after having escaped the 'new social changes' occurring on mainland China. The Nationalist President *Chiang Kai-Shek*, with more than two million refugees made up especially of soldiers, bureaucrats and business people, began a new stage in Taiwan's history. This situation continued unabated, despite the death of *Chiang Kai-Shek*, until 1987 when martial law was eventually abolished under *Chiang Ching-Kuo*, son and political heir to *Chiang Kai-Shek*.¹⁰ Especially in the first period of its authoritarian regime, 'the *GMD* obsessed, with the past of the mainland (the People's Republic of China), were living in a

¹⁰ Martial law in Taiwan was declared in May 1949. *Chiang Kai-Shek*, who died in 1975, was succeeded by his son *Chiang Ching-Kuo*.

displaced history, which was nevertheless the present for Taiwan' (Hai Ren 1996: 93-4). For the Nationalist government, in fact, *Taipei* was just a 'provisional' capital of China, and Taiwan the ground from which to launch a counter-attack to recover the motherland from the communists. At that time, mainlanders themselves had the feeling of and were perceived by local inhabitants as not belonging to Taiwan. The atrocities committed by the *GMD* regime had created a gulf between the two groups which is still upheld in the memories of the past and senses of place of local inhabitants, even if a certain process of 'reconciliation' seems to be occurring in the public sphere, especially among younger generations. On the positive side, one can also say that

from the 1950's through the 1980's, Taiwan social structure underwent a very fundamental, one might say revolutionary, transformation. Population shifted from the countryside to the cities, employment from agriculture to industry, commerce and services. All quality of life indicators went up dramatically. Importantly, based on education and business success, new social actors emerged within the Taiwanese community such as a private capitalist class, an industrial working class and professionals such as technocrats, intellectuals and white collars (Gold 1994: 50),

and that

this initially overwhelmingly dominant emigré state [GMD] with little or no base in Taiwanese society, autonomous from social pressures, presided over economic development and social change... had to come to terms with the socio-political consequences of its own success (Gold 1994: 48).

Since 1987 Taiwan's rapid and radical economic transformation, which began in the late 1950s, has become more intense, and the political changes which have occurred in such a short time, have been impressive.¹¹ In contemporary Taiwan, a process has been set in motion in which 'social forces and not the party-state are determining the agenda of pace and change' (Gold 1994: 47). Senses of a Taiwanese identity and consciousness in fact have emerged strongly during these years. 'Since the mid-1980s, cultural discourses about **Taiwanese** have been an important part of public culture. Rewriting history has become one of the most popular **public projects** in Taiwan. Hundreds of books about the history of Taiwan, for example, have been published in the past few years' (Hai Ren 1996: 83-4).

¹¹ For the political changes in Taiwan see especially Leng & Lin (1993).

'Taiwan's quest for identity' (Gold 1994) has generated the emergence of a Taiwanese popular culture (Bosco 1994a) which constantly stresses personal and collective senses of attachment and belonging to the island through literature, films and cultural events (Gold 1994). Taiwan's seeking of its own position in the international political scene and global economic market is strengthening its own identity, despite mainland China's attempts to undermine the process and re-draw both the island's territory and its political, economic and cultural space. The February 28 Incident Monument, recently displayed in the *New Park* in *Taipei*, is indicative of the Taiwanese re-appropriation of their history and land. The 'tragedy,' 'terror' and 'fear' signified in the monument is coupled with a local attempt 'to *discontinue the history of postwar Taiwan and thus to reorder social space, national space*' (Hai Ren 1996: 92).

In this context of social change, the extent to which 'cultural traditions and parameters' have been practised and have been felt to have retained significance, despite modifications or inventions, is a fascinating topic for research in social anthropology. In other words, what is of interest is how the attribution of constancy and stability to cultural traditions and parameters engages with the irregularities, changes and discrepancies of modern life. A further and related aspect of this would lead us to speculate on the extent to which expected and/or substantial changes have not occurred, and which elements, if any, have not been affected by the dynamics of change and discontinuity.

It seems that the impact of modern capitalist forms of consumerism on contemporary Taiwanese society have definitely influenced but not removed people's sense of place.¹² I will argue that, despite urbanisation and migration, people's senses of community and place-based identity are still very much felt and imagined (though differentially) in the Taiwan context.

'Chinese' cultural traditions and parameters have been predominantly concerned with the human person and his (and, to a lesser extent, her) role in the family, community and society through a sense of unity with the cosmos and the world of nature. Any attempt to study the impact of modern life on contemporary Taiwanese has to be familiar with the way people 'sense' their being part of their 'places.'

By focusing on selective cultural traditions and parameters, my intention is not to (re)construct artificially some kind of underlying and structural unity '*governing all empirically realized configurations regardless of social conditions*' (Bourdieu 1989: 124) but to speculate, in the context of Taiwan's transformation, on the logic(s) of some persistent cultural traditions and parameters,

¹² For a very good discussion on this and related issues, see Parkin, D. 1993. Nemi in the modern world: return of the exotic? *Man* 28, 79-99. See also *Theoretical trajectory* 4, in the introductory part of this thesis.

which seem to be expressive and constitutive of 'being Chinese' or 'being Taiwanese'.¹³ Reflecting on ethnographic data collected for this thesis, I identify three areas which have a perceptible connection with *Tudi Gong* and with the notion of *place and senses of place*. These are a) senses of attachment to the land, ancestors and place of origin; b) place, social mobility and senses of community and identity; and, finally, c) a preliminary speculation on the relationship between place, geomancy and fate in the context of Taiwan's social change.

Senses of attachment to the land, ancestors and place of origin

The Chinese are said to have, and claim to have, an intense attachment to the land and ancestors which, ideally, allows them to experience a sense of continuity with people and places 'so necessary for people's sense of reality and so essential for their sense of identity' (Relph 1976: 144).¹⁴ This attachment is differentially experienced by the Chinese living on Taiwan depending, for example, on the grade of social mobility, the sense of collective and individual identity and belonging to one's place of origin, status and gender.

The desire and sense of 'being placed' have been a key theme expressed in Chinese art, philosophy, religious traditions, geomancy and can, indeed, be experienced as a profound sense of 'nostalgia' (鄉愁) when away from one's own native soil.¹⁵ The poet 李白 *Li Bai* intensively expresses the nostalgic sense of being away from one's native soil in the poem *The night remembrance* (夜思)¹⁶

¹³ 'Being Chinese' or 'being Taiwanese' is, here, used in some cultural sense, not in the sense of nationality, a separate and complex issue.

¹⁴ Relph (1976: 63, 144) quotes Cox, H. 1968. The restoration of a sense of place. *Ekistics* 25, 422-24. On p. 423, Cox describes the sense of identity with a place as 'the sense of continuity of place necessary to people's sense of reality'.

¹⁵ The contemporary use of the term 'nostalgia' seems to refer to a 'feeling of fondness for something in the past, often mixed with a kind of pleasant sadness' (See Dictionary of Contemporary English, Longman, England, 1992 [1987]). Relph (1976) quoting McCann 1941. Nostalgia: a review of the literature. *Psychological Bulletin* 38, 165-82, writes that 'in 1678 the word *nostalgia* was coined by a Swiss medical student, Johannes Hofer, to describe an illness that was characterised by such symptoms as insomnia, anorexia, palpitations, stupor, fever, and especially persistent thinking of home' (Relph 1976: 41). In Chinese the word 'nostalgia' is 鄉愁. The first character refers to a) a village; the country as contrasted with a city or town; rural; b) a small administrative unit comprising several villages; c) one's native place or birth place. The second character refers to sad, distressed, worried, unhappy, melancholy. Furthermore, the sense of melancholy can be explained as a kind of 'imprisonment' when tied to one place: '... death itself, another hell... to be tied to one place' (See Burton, R. 1932. *Anatomy of melancholy*. London: Dent, p. 344. Quoted in Relph 1976: 41).

¹⁶ See: <http://www.chinapage.com/libai014.gif>. The translation of the poem is mine.

床前明月光	<i>The light of the moon in front of my bed,</i>
疑是地上霜	<i>I suspect there is frost on the ground.</i>
舉頭望明月	<i>When I raise my head, I admire the bright moon,</i>
低頭思故鄉	<i>when I lower it, I remember my native land.</i>

In this vein, the custom of giving a handful of rice or earth from one's native soil before leaving for a 'foreign' land represents, for many elderly people in contemporary Taiwan, a blessing.¹⁷ It also bears the desire for those who carry it, and the reassurance for those who give it, that one will not forget one's own roots and one's own land.

Fei points out that '*Chinese society is fundamentally rural*' (Fei 1992: 37), and regards the people living in the countryside as the foundation of Chinese society. He continues by saying that '*country people are figuratively as well as literally 'soiled' (土氣). Although this label may seem disrespectful, the character meaning 'soil' (土 tu) is appropriately used here*' (Fei 1992: 37). It is from the soil that people make a livelihood and can, therefore, appreciate the value of it. The term *tu*, however, also has a negative connotation. In contemporary Taiwan one can often hear, especially among friends, a labelling of people as *ni hao tu* 你好土 (you are very *tu*) or *tu baozi* 土包子 (a rustic person, a hillbilly) to refer to a 'country bumpkin' way of wearing clothes, acting, or imagining the world.

The character *tu* also refers to what is local, native, indigenous, and expressive of the bonds that a local community has with a specific place. The Chinese term *tuhua* 土話 refers, for example, to the local dialect, *tudi wenhua* 土地文化 and *xiangtu wenhua* 鄉土文化 refer to local cultures. The recent stress on Taiwanese local culture is generating a revival of such terms in everyday language, the media and scholarly conferences.¹⁸

There is, it seems, a changing 'consciousness' (意識) towards one's own place among the people of Taiwan which seems to be expressed in an attempt at re-appropriating a 'soil' and a 'voice' which seemed to have been lost or suppressed during the Japanese occupation and the successive Mainland government. The continuous establishment and refurbishing of *Tudi Gong* temples is, I suggest, indicative of such an attempt at a more local level.

¹⁷ Personal communication with *Chen Wen-Te*, London, March 1997.

¹⁸ During the conference held in *Taipei* in 1995 (15th -17th August) on the history of Taiwan over the last one-hundred years (台灣近百年史研討會) these terms were repeatedly employed by several speakers.

In some cases, as I have illustrated in chapter one of this thesis, *Tudi Gong* temples may function as political entities through which the voices of neighbourhoods and localities can be heard, either as counter-representation or enforcement of an established political order.

On more symbolic lines, I would argue that the Chinese sense of *tu* also entails a feeling of existential attachment to the land and to one's native soil. It is from the sense of *tu* that the Chinese still refer to the agricultural cycle whose cyclicity is celebrated in the family and community, and through rituals, unites 'heaven and earth.' It is from the sense of *tu* that place as a specific location in space and time also expresses a sense of 'locating' oneself, as part of family/community, in the entire cosmos.

The case of Taiwan appears to suggest that the ties with one's place of origin in China mainland can be and have been maintained at the level of the 'imagined.' However, in recent years improvements in cultural and economic relations between the two sides, and the frequent visits of Taiwanese to their place of origin on the mainland may suggest that a certain degree of membership in the native local system might well go 'beyond the imagined.'

It seems, in fact, that despite a long history of internal and external migration as well as separation from continental China, the Chinese living on Taiwan and those in 'diaspora' have always, somehow, maintained a certain sense of attachment to the land of their ancestors. This is shown by the often unfulfilled desire to be buried in their place of origin, and by remittances sent to their local communities in order to build temples as well as ancestral halls. These senses have also been felt in Taiwan during the fifty years of Japanese colonial rule (1895-1945) and the next four decades of Nationalist rule, when it was impossible to visit one's place of 'origin' in China Mainland. Thus, the Chinese term *guxiang* 故鄉 or *jiexiang* 家鄉 are literally translated as one's hometown or native place. Its meaning also refers to some sense of attachment to one's place of origin and, in more general terms, cultural heritage. *Jiguan* 籍貫 and *laojia* 老家 - one's original home, as a location in space¹⁹ - seems to express the local link between land-ancestors-family-community and it is 'imagined' and interpreted at different levels, which indeed interrelate and overlap, depending on individual's, family's and communities' various degrees of attachment to their place of origin.²⁰

¹⁹ In Taiwan the expression: 'Where do you come from?' is generally used to refer to *laojia* or *jiguan*.

²⁰ In this regard, one has to highlight the gender dimension in an approach to the study of place in Chinese society. Given the patrilineality of Chinese society, marriages could be considered as a potential 'dislocation' for women (as 'voicelessness', 'nameless', or in Ardener's terms 'muted models') and, at the same time, women could be regarded as intermediaries between families, communities and places.

Place, social change and senses of community and identity

Contrary to expectations, the felt need for a sense of community and identity seems to have been enhanced in contemporary Taiwan despite, or perhaps as a result of, displacements caused by urbanization, migration and cosmopolitanism.²¹ Kin-based affiliations, at the very centre of *'the ring of concentric places'* (see Ryden, above), are still significant conduits of identity and belonging for the Taiwanese. Forms of co-associations based both on shared places of origin and, increasingly, shared interests (Yin Chien-chung 1981: 319-37) are variously created in the practice of everyday life. Greenhalgh wrote that in Taiwan

urban life is structured by webs of social ties that may be among the closest knit and furthest flung in the world. Family-centered, these personal networks bind urban residents to one another, to kin in the countryside, and to kin all over the globe, obliterating the neat social distinctions between urban and rural, domestic and foreign (Greenhalgh 1984: 529).

I would suggest that in the multiplicity of such interactions and networks a sense of being attached to, and associating oneself with, a place of origin is still felt to a considerable degree in urban areas by significant numbers of people. In this regard, pilgrimages to famous temples in Taiwan and Southern *Fujian* are a significant vehicle for authenticating place-based co-identities.

Furthermore, although in rural place-based communities 'co-presence' and 'presence availability' (Giddens 1993) may have diminished due to various factors (off-farm work, migration to the city, increased independence from kinship ties, etc.), the community has not yet 'disintegrated' or 'deteriorated,' despite Gallin's prediction stated in his study of *Hsin Hsing* village (1966). Instead, new forms of highly mixed associations, based on different interests, have been created, while old networks have been maintained, enlarged or disrupted. Senses of 'communion' and 'co-association' are continually sought with relatives, with old and potential friends, colleagues, and peers, in ways that suit the changes of modern life.²²

One may highlight three key-factors determining such a process. Firstly, transportation and communication, prioritised in development policies, allow people to visit, in a relatively short time,

²¹ Taiwan reached a population of 20 million inhabitants in August 1989. Tsai wrote that *'Taiwan saw a rapid increase in urban population: in 1952, only 47.6% of the population lived in urban places with a population of 50,000 or more; in 1980, the urban population had increased to 70.3% of the island's population'* (Tsai 1989: 85).

²² The Chinese desire for togetherness is very clearly expressed in the many festivities (esp. Chinese New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival, etc.) during which families usually reunite. An absent family member is 're-membered' by placing a rice bowl on the table. In this vein, it would also be interesting to explore the meaning of those objects such as the round table, oranges offered during worships, and the full moon, to which the Chinese attach some sense of togetherness as well as completeness.

their hometowns or other places. Secondly, the sense of a place-based identity is ontologically felt to a considerable degree among people living in the city.²³ One has also to consider the desire for 'some fresh air,' the feeling of being part of nature, the familiarity of sounds and smell, participation in family or community celebrations, as reasons why people return, whenever possible, to their places of origin. Thirdly, small family-run businesses in the city maintain some sort of link with the countryside and the owners also form associations based on shared places of origin which offer an alternative form of rural social security to which they can return if their city business does not go well.²⁴

Twenty years after their original work, Gallin and Gallin, in a descriptive re-study (1982) of *Hsin Hsing* village, had to re-frame the prediction of their earlier study. They detected that economic development had, to a certain degree, contributed to a re-flourishing, with some modifications, of socio-cultural life in rural areas. This was mainly due to the very nature of Taiwan's economy which, since the 1960s, witnessed a continuous process of integrating industry in the countryside (Gallin & Gallin 1982: 239).²⁵

Thompson (1984) pointed out that most of the Chinese who settled in Taiwan from the seventeenth century onwards were peasant farmers. As they had done on China mainland, they continued to make a living from the land in the new settlements. From the late 1950s,

the pattern of more than three centuries has been radically altered. Industry has burgeoned to replace agriculture as the key factor, and concomitantly, Taiwan's population is no longer characteristically rural... In modern Taiwan rural can no longer be equated with agricultural (Thompson 1984: 553).

Since 1949, the year in which Taiwan launched a land reform program, its economic development has been promoted through various *Four-Year Plans* and *Six-Year Economic Development Plans* which continue today (Tsai 1989). Taiwan's impressive economic performance between 1952 and 1993 has become a model for many countries in the Developing World (Simon & Kau 1992: Introduction). However, as Williams stresses, *'there is a price to be paid for rapid industrialization, urbanization, and high mass consumption. That price, moreover, is*

²³ I am mainly referring to *Taipei*.

²⁴ However, in some cases the ties with one's place of origin have been severed in order to advance one's fortune.

²⁵ Gallin and Gallin continue by pointing out that *'anthropological and sociological data collected over a 20-year period showed how villagers who were primarily involved in a near subsistence type of agriculture were transformed into part-time agriculturalists and full-time off-farm workers and entrepreneurs'* (Gallin & Gallin 1982: 239).

compounded in those places, such as Taiwan, with very high population density and limited resource bases' (Williams 1992: 187). The growth of the environmental movement in Taiwan (Williams 1989) demonstrates that its inhabitants are becoming more aware of environmental concerns and economic development, both of which have to be faced together if the 'quality of life' is to be improved.

The proliferation and vitality of traditional religious practices seem to have encouraged development and modernisation in Taiwan. Place-based religious practices can be regarded as an arena in which personal, family and community achievements can be shown by building or enlarging temples and by inviting as many guests as possible to banquets to celebrate local deities. Rituals, in fact, have the potential for creating social networks inside and outside the family or village. These may be utilised for personal or community ends as well as to establish new friendships in view of possible marriages. At the same time, one may stress that the rapid economic development of Taiwanese society and the subsequent increase in the people's incomes are reflected in the flourishing of new temples as well as refurbishing of old ones. Watson's description of the situation in the New Territories that '*rather than dying out as a consequence of urbanization and industrialization, the new sources of income have allowed people to maintain a religious tradition which has long disappeared in China*'²⁶ may well be applied to Taiwanese society.²⁷

Religious practices seem also to have enhanced the identity and consciousness of being Taiwanese as opposed to being 'mainlanders.' During one of the celebrations that the *Chen* family held to honour *Lin Mazu* in *Taipei (Beitou)* in April 1993, I was introduced by a family member as a student of Chinese culture. Later on, the reaction of another family member, who probably was the

²⁶ Watson, J. L. 1983. Rural society: Hong Kong's New Territories. *The China Quarterly* 95, p. 487. It has to be pointed out, however, that Watson's point could also 'partly' be applied to China mainland, given the recent revival of popular religious practices on the continent. I have stressed 'partly' because I feel that such a revival on the mainland may also be seen as an attempt to resist a political apparatus which has long viewed such practices as superstitious and disruptive of the established social order.

²⁷ Another aspect, which I will not develop in this thesis, concerns the '*local and regional organization in Taiwan, a topic that, at its broadest, involves all supradomestic social organization having some basis in locality and territory*' (Crissman 1981: 89). Skinner's work in the context of traditional China, and Crissman's (1981), Sangren's (1987) and Lin Mei-Rong's (1987b; 1988; 1991) studies in the context of Taiwan furnish some theoretical postulates and ethnographic insights into the ways local communities interact both spatially and hierarchically, and the variety of networks - as a result of economic, political and religious factors - which are created by individuals as well as communities living in a specific place. In my future work, I intend to focus on people's *senses of place and memories of the past* to detect how such networks have been rearranged through space and time, and whether they have been affected by, and in turn affected, local traditions and cults.

With regard to Skinner's work, see: Skinner, G. W. 1971. Chinese peasants and the closed community: an open and shut case. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13, 3, 270-81; *ibid.* 1964-65. Marketing and social structure in rural China, 3 parts. *Journal of Asian Studies* 24, 3-43, 195-228, 363-99; *ibid.* 1977. Introduction: urban and rural in Chinese society, and Cities and the hierarchy of local systems. In *The city in late imperial China*. Stanford: University Press.

main organiser of the festivities, was not unexpected. *'This is a Taiwanese celebration. You should study Taiwanese culture.'* Although all Chen family's ancestors came to Taiwan from the same place in southern Fujian, the sense of their Taiwanese identity seems to be variously felt by its members.²⁸ Bosco indicates that

*Taiwanese identity first formed around religion when the Japanese, late in their colonial rule, began to try to assimilate the Taiwanese by, among other things, promoting Shinto religion and suppressing Taiwan's popular religion... The KMT, following the anti-traditionalism of post-May 4th intellectuals, has long been an opponent of popular folk religion, viewing popular religion as superstition and a waste of money that could be invested to build the nation... As a result of KMT opposition to popular religion, popular religion's *baibais* (festivals) and their feasting and display of the pig became symbols of Taiwanese-ness (Bosco 1994a: 396).*

Bosco continues by stressing that for the Taiwanese, religious festivals *'were celebrations of family and community (which excluded the mainlanders)'* (Bosco 1994a: 396). On the one hand, they served as a form of resistance against the Nationalist government (KMT), thus strengthening local identity and sense of belonging to the island; on the other they were used for political purposes. In fact, *'most successful politicians use religious organisations and ceremonies to build electoral support for their campaigns'* (Bosco 1994a: 397).

Given their *multilocation* and *multilocution*, *Tudi Gong* cults and temples seem to have especially contributed towards the strengthening of a local sense of community and identity. People's desire to belong 'somewhere,' to be 'rooted,' can be exemplified in the continuous establishment and re-furbishing of *Tudi Gong* temples which were often referred to by most of my raconteurs as the most illustrative 'representations' of a local community. As already stressed in this thesis, in recent years, the government's attempt to *'build local communities'* (建立社區) has weakened its fierce past condemnation of popular religion:

recent government publications have shifted to a more sympathetic tone, listing religious festivals in tourist magazines, and lauding temple art and some aspects of popular religion in glossy magazines (Bosco 1994a: 397).

This process of 'openness' and 'understanding,' however, conceals a political aim:

²⁸ There is a lot more to say about the Chen family, its spatial differentiation in four settlements around Taipei and its connection through the cult of Mazu. I hope to be able to investigate this interesting example of what Freedman terms a *'localized lineage'* at some time in the future.

the government's embrace of popular religion is in part an attempt to claim it as Chinese and deny its Taiwanese-ness, but by validating it and including it among government-approved cultural elements, the government is also reducing the opposition between Chinese-ness and Taiwanese-ness (Bosco 1994a: 397).

In this context, I wonder whether, through these 'permitted' practices of popular religion, various feelings and expressions of local identity are, at the same time, being nurtured. These, as history has shown us, could become potentially subversive social forces in the future.

Place, geomancy and fate

My ethnographic data on *Tudi Gong* have also provoked a preliminary speculation, which I wish to expand in my future work, on *place*, *geomancy* and their interrelationship with *fate*. In this section, I intend merely to highlight some insights which may be useful for an understanding of the changing Taiwanese senses of place as well as to indicate to the reader the extent to which geomancy, a fundamental Chinese cultural parameter, has been adapted to suit a context of radical social change such as Taiwan.²⁹

In general terms, geomancy (風水 *fengshui*, wind and water),³⁰ refers to the Chinese art of discerning a suitable location for human dwellings, through detecting the 氣 *qi*, energy flows in the physical landscape. The good or bad luck of a family - and its descendants - and the community to which they belong is believed to be determined by the choice of their dwelling site as well as the appropriate time for the building process.

The scope of geomancy also embraces the finding of a suitable site for graves and for temples, as the supernatural beings' residence. It has been used in the construction of imperial capitals (Wright 1977) as well as villages (Fan Wei 1992). In other words, geomancy seems to express the Chinese search for harmony between people, the physical landscape and the supernatural world (天人合一).³¹

²⁹ One may refer to Freedman, M. 1969. Geomancy. *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1968, 5-16; Feuchtwang, S. 1974. *An anthropological analysis of Chinese geomancy*. Laos: Vithagna; Weller (1987: 173-84) and especially to the recent articles by Ye Chun-Rong (1995) and Feuchtwang (1998). For an introductory examination of the concept of fate in Chinese folk ideology see Harrell (1987).

³⁰ In Taiwan, 風水 *fengshui* is usually called 地理 *dili*.

³¹ Ye Chun-Rong (1995).

My question, here, focuses on how this Chinese 'parameter' contrasts, for example, with the built environments of the cities in Taiwan? Has it been re-interpreted to accommodate all the changes which have occurred in Taiwan over the last few decades? Has it been jettisoned?

Ahern (1979) suggests that the Taiwanese distinguish two basic kinds of domestic architecture: the *dacu*, which is normally found in rural areas, and the *yanglou* (foreign-style building), which is generally built in urban areas. Due to Taiwan's rapid social and economic change, *yanglou* may also be noticed in the countryside. However, the two styles of building are generally associated respectively with farming (*dacu*) and commerce and industry (*yanglou*).

The changing domestic architecture, Ahern continues, may tell us something of the Taiwanese changing attitudes towards occupation and households. They tell us even more about the relation the Taiwanese have with the built environment of cities and the countryside and the extent to which fundamental Chinese parameters, such as *fengshui*, have been manipulated to accommodate socio-economic transformations. While the *dacu*, for example, is carefully built according to *fengshui* and can be altered in case of bad luck, the *yanglou* is built according to the road³² and its *fengshui* cannot be manipulated: 'all you can do is to move out' (Ahern 1979: 165). Ahern concludes that what the Taiwanese are perhaps implying is that

if one lives in a yanglou, assuming one engages in commerce, one has a different kind of control over one's fate than if one lives in a dacu, assuming one engages in farming... in other words, farmers may be the prey of the vagaries of the climate, but over time they can recoup their losses; businessmen are even more prey to the vagaries of the market, and as a consequence may be unable to repair the damage caused by a crisis, just as they are unable to repair the dili of their houses (Ahern 1979: 166, 168).

Ahern, however, does not seem to take into consideration the degree of geomantic manipulation which can be operated on the internal structure of the *yanglou*. On several occasions, it was pointed out to me that in those cases in which the 'fixity' of the external structure of buildings does not allow change of its geomancy (i.e. in cities), the Taiwanese operate on their internal structure by re-positioning rooms as well as furniture according to geomantic principles.

In addition, the recuperation that Ahern indicates with regard to people engaging in farming and, conversely, the inability to recover businesses for those engaging in commerce is a rather questionable assumption. Both farmers and business people can be affected by recuperation and loss. As several people told me in *Yongxing* village, the politics of the big cities affect farmers' work more than 'the vagaries of the climate' thus making life in the countryside rather unstable.

³² However, they are built at propitious times (Ahern 1979: 164).

The above example indicates to the reader the extent to which geomancy is still practised in contemporary Taiwan and how it can be manipulated relatively to fit the discrepancies of modern life. In this context, I would like to stress that people's concerns with geomancy in the practice of everyday life primarily and significantly relate to people's attempts to nurture or change one's own personal and/or community fate.³³ In fact, if we extend *fengshui* beliefs, as to the practices and social relations of everyday life, geomancy could also refer, presumably, to the stability and security which are sought after and, ideally, felt by occupying one's place in the family, in a group of friends, in the community (i.e. urban neighbourhood, rural village), in the wider society, in the cosmos. A community living in a specific territory, in addition, could also be imagined as a 'pulse' as well as a 'node-point' of the veins which characterise Chinese geomantic beliefs. The various local rituals performed during the annual cycle and on occasion of special events could also be seen as a way to re-establish people relationship with each other and with their place, as an attempt to facilitate and strengthen energy flows in the physical, human and social landscape. In this vein, Feuchtwang writes that

much of the cosmology used in fengshui is evoked by Taoist ritual and local festivals... Taoist rituals, including those of local festivals, are indeed ways of improving or maintaining collective destinies (Feuchtwang 1998: 53).

On a personal level, the discrepancies and instabilities of modern life, and the degree of 'displacement' and 'ontological insecurity' (Giddens 1993) these cause, seem to have generated an increase of the practices connected with, but not exclusive to, popular religion such as 算命 *suanming*, the fortune telling practice. This has become significantly widespread among younger generations and does indeed show a concern and a desire to be rooted both physically and ontologically.

³³ Feuchtwang stresses that 'a place in the collective person of its resident households can know its destiny (*yun*) through *fengshui*. At the same time, as with other Chinese ways of divining destiny, remedies can be found. Destiny can be changed. The aspects and dispositions of building and natural features within the horizon are malleable (Feuchtwang 1998: 53).

6.3 Positioning Tudi Gong in the context of Chinese religions

Tudi Gong is the best door by which to enter the world of Taiwanese folk religion.

Lin Mei-Rong³⁴

A good study on Tudi Gong (and Youying Gong) may solve a lot of the problems that foreign and local anthropologists encounter when dealing with Taiwanese folk religion.

Gao Xian-Zhi³⁵

Lin Mei-Rong's and Gao Xian-Zhi's assumptions quoted above and the various discussions I had with both of them during my fieldwork have inspired the main question I will address in this part of chapter six. In the next section, I wish to indicate to the reader the degree to which a study of Tudi Gong in contemporary Taiwan contributes towards a re-consideration of some 'topo-centric' debates which have characterised the study of Chinese religions especially in the western academic arena. In the second section I will hint, through various ethnographic insights, at the specificities of the practice of popular religion in a changing society such as Taiwan.

³⁴ Personal communication with Lin Mei-Rong, *Taipei*, November 1994.

³⁵ Personal communication with Gao Xian-Zhi, *Taipei*, January 1995.

Tudi Gong: 'a point in between' unity and diversity in 'Chinese' religion

The Chinese annual cycle is marked by an overwhelming number of festivities during which domestic and communal rituals are held to celebrate the variety of inhabitants of the Chinese supernatural pantheon.³⁶ It would be well-nigh impossible to list all the supernatural beings in Taiwanese popular beliefs. Harrell points out that these are '*legion; each community, each household, even each person, believes in and worships a different pantheon*' (Harrell 1974: 191).

Personally, I must say that my attempt, as observer, to pattern and systematise the Chinese pantheon(s), the exact identity of its/their Spirits, the boundaries between Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and Folk religion, etc., was to be 'shattered' by the variety of interpretations, flexibility and manipulation which characterise the way religion is experienced, practised and explained in contemporary Taiwanese society. Anthropologists' over-emphasis on patterning and systematising, in fact, may miss the specificity of place-bound religious (i.e. cultural) 'voices' as well as 'silences' and the extent to which these are created and re-created in the practice of everyday life.

A close analysis, for example, of a booklet on *Tudi Gong*, the 福德正神金經, 土地公經 *Fude Zhengshen Jinjing, Tudi Gong Jing*³⁷ which I found in several temples dedicated to Him, shows that an underlying Confucian ideology is markedly allied with Buddhist and Taoist practices and views. The attempt to clearly demarcate the boundaries of these main religious traditions is, I feel, an atypical undertaking made by the 'religious' specialist, the 'government' or the social scientist.

In addition, as already pointed out, the religious pantheon exhibited in *Tudi Gong* temples combines Buddhist and Taoist deities, and even clearly defined Buddhist temples often portray the statue of *Tudi Gong* and *Mazu*. In Vancouver, the International Buddhist temple dedicated to *Guanyin* (國際佛教觀音寺) has a small *Tudi Gong* temple on the left side of its main entrance and 'vegetarian offerings' made of rice and bean curd, shaped in the form of chickens or fish, are offered on His altar.

People 'on the ground,' it seems, tend to assimilate and create '*culture (including religion) as part of everyday life within a system of social relations*' (Weller 1987: 172). Themes and practices of the three main traditions can be - and have been - borrowed and relatively transformed in specific social contexts.

I incline to say that the logic(s) governing these ongoing processes of assimilation and transformation at a grassroots level lean more towards practices than beliefs, more towards a 'network of relations and involvements' (關係網) than structured systems of thought and classification, and more on reciprocity than dichotomy. The 'western' or 'scientist' tendency of

³⁶ For this see Feuchtwang (1974), Sangren (1987: 53-5), Gao (1995a) and especially de Groot (1886; 1892-1910; 1910).

³⁷ This booklet is published by 力榮印刷有限公司, 台北縣板橋.

making distinctions in an *either/or* manner has probably not allowed the 'Chinese' tendency of reasoning in a *both/and* manner to question and contribute to the nature and style of, for example, scholars' representations in their own writings of the practice of religion in a 'Chinese' context.³⁸ As western anthropologists, in fact, we should always be wary of foisting home-derived conceptualisations of religion on to the Chinese in both the process of writing down and of writing up.³⁹

In this regard, Feuchtwang (1991: 141) quotes an important note that Freedman wrote in 1974 to introduce the first of three lectures on 'the western perception of Chinese religion.' He states:

my chief aim is to illustrate (from Chinese data) difficulties attending description and analysis of exotic systems of ritual and 'belief.' (a) We have a notion of what our religion is - and we are tempted to measure other people's religion by that rough standard. (b) We change our views of what analysis of religion ought to be (under inspiration from developments in social sciences), and our perception of exotic religions changes accordingly.

Freedman's assumption - a sort of double hermeneutic - seems to suggest that before studying Chinese religions one should embark on a self-study of one's own religion, so as to become aware of one's own theoretical background. In the same note, ^{9/}Freedman also asks whether religion is something which can be universally defined, delimited, given a name to, and thus made 'separable.' Or is religion best described, as I would suggest, by approaching it as a *multi-locutionary* phenomenon generated *by* and *in* specific places, and as a *plurivocal* and *polythetic* term?

³⁸ Yang (1961: 294-95) distinguishes two basic forms of religion in Chinese society: institutional and diffused. The former assumes the nature of a separate social institution, the latter has no significant independent existence and it has often been regarded as superstitious by both western and Chinese scholars. The study of religion has generally focused its attention on textual religious traditions, thus creating dichotomies between 'universal' and 'local' traditions, 'popular' and 'official/institutional' traditions, 'great' and 'little' traditions. Max Weber in his *The religion of the Chinese* (Glencoe: IU Free Press, 1951) made a distinction between traditional and rational religion. Weller summarises such a distinction by writing that '**traditional** religion, according to Weber, fills popular needs for meaning and assurance by providing an enchanted world where every object is filled with supernatural qualities. Under certain historical conditions, however, a particular status group may begin to question traditional religious assumptions self-consciously. The result is a **rational** religion that abstracts the supernatural from the natural world, and that uses the supernatural as a basis for an ethical code' (Weller 1987: 8). Being aware of the limitations and 'westernocentrism' of such dichotomies in the study of religion is essential for an understanding of 'Chinese' folk religion and the way it has been explained by both western and Chinese scholars.

³⁹ Freedman wrote that '[A]lthough in very modern times the Chinese have produced a term *tsung-chiao* [zong-jiao 宗教] (coined in fact by Japanese) to correspond to the western category, they do not in fact think in the fashion implied by our category. In traditional China you could ask a man about his *chiao* [jiao 教] (his doctrine, his school); you could question him about his rituals and festivals. But there is no way of getting him to conceive of a separable area of cultural life corresponding to our word religion.' (Quoted in Feuchtwang 1991: 141).

Watson, Freedman and Wolf

Explaining the meaning of Chinese folk religion, Watson writes that

there were, of course, important elements and themes that reappeared in nearly all manifestations of religious belief in China. One was the yin-yang dichotomy; another was the tripartite division of supernatural beings into gods, ghosts and ancestors. It is quite another thing, however, to argue that there was a Chinese religion or one set of beliefs that together constituted the core of China's religious tradition. Most anthropologists who have worked on this problem would no doubt agree that it is best to speak of local traditions and local cults which relate, in turn, to specific communities or regional alliances. 'Folk religion,' therefore, must be understood as a generalized term used as a form of shorthand to represent these local traditions (Watson 1982: 310).

Watson's view that Chinese folk religion is a term which should be used as a form of shorthand to represent the variety of local traditions and cults which, in turn, relate to specific communities and regional alliances has been widely shared by anthropologists of Chinese religions and society.⁴⁰ The view - and, conjecturally, the risk - that such assumptions seem to show, however, is that of portraying Chinese religion as a mere 'sum' of its parts without any substantial and basic interrelationship among its various local materialisations.

When, in his latest writings, Freedman suggested that '*a Chinese religion exists; or, at any rate, we ought to begin with that assumption*' (Freedman 1974: 20), Watson reacted by writing that Freedman's statement '*came as a shock to many readers, especially those who have worked on Chinese 'folk' religion in recent years. Most specialists would probably not agree that a unified religious system existed for the peasant masses*' (Watson 1976: 356).

The publication of *Religion and ritual in Chinese society* in 1974 explores this tension in the dialogue between Freedman who suggests a 'country' (China) which allows '*religious similarity to be expressed as though it were religious difference*' and Wolf who argues that '*this society may have treated religious difference as though they were religious similarities*' (Wolf 1974: 1-18). Although valuable contributions have been added to this ongoing debate (Bell 1989; Feuchtwang 1991) '*the basic question remains as vexed as ever*' (Shahar & Weller 1996: 21).

⁴⁰ De Gloppe seems to have made the most 'expressive' statement on the local variations of Chinese religions in the Taiwan context by writing that '*there is no more reason to expect various Taiwanese customs or beliefs to form a coherent, logically consistent, and uniform system than there is to expect the doctrine of the Trinity, the tooth fairy, and Easter eggs to fit together in a consistent American popular religion*' (Quoted in *Religion and ritual in Chinese society*, ed. A. Wolf, p. 44).

For a comprehensive and detailed overview of the debate, the reader may refer to the articles I have just quoted above. What I wish to pinpoint here is the extent to which a reflection on the ethnographic information on *Tudi Gong* I collected during fieldwork can contribute to this ongoing debate. I am inclined to view the cult of *Tudi Gong* as occupying an intermediary position between Freedman's view that 'a Chinese religion exists' (i. e. some kind of unity) and the view of a Chinese religion which subsists only in local traditions and cults (i. e. some kind of diversity).

My assumption is built on the very connotations of *Tudi Gong* which, as shown in the previous two chapters, clearly portray local and global characteristics in the way it is imagined in the Chinese context. Localised practices and representations of *Tudi Gong* have substantially indicated people's concerns with the land, the ancestors, the family and the community (see previous part of this chapter). The cultural traditions, practices and parameters these concerns have generated have been variously felt and imagined by the Chinese through time and space. They have been differently experienced and interpreted in the practice of everyday life and in the narratives of specific people and places. *Tudi Gong* is, I suggest, the expression of this ongoing process which is given specific localised characteristics.

To some extent, *Tudi Gong* cults and temples reflect and reinforce place-based and, as often in contemporary Taiwan, multiple senses of identity and community. At the same time, *Tudi Gong* cults are felt as something which expresses a sense of Chineseness, thus going beyond and across specific places. The relationship between the two poles is a dialectical one, not one of precedence or consequence of one over the other.

Bell and Feuchtwang

It seems that Freedman and Wolf have in their dialogue construed a diametrical model in approaching Chinese religion which allows little space for complicity and interaction. Do their views, and their separate invocations towards unity or towards diversity in Chinese religion, reflect their own theoretical starting positions at patterning and systematising culture - and religion - into a coherent system of representations and practices, though from different perspectives? Or, should we, as Feuchtwang stresses, become aware that

coherence, systematicity, and the disposition of similarities and differences defining a difference between what can be described as 'Chinese' and something else, all these must remain open to being found, or not found; and not finding them is not a sign of anthropological failure (Feuchtwang 1991: 157).

Bell (1989: 35) commenting on the 'fascinating shift' that 'the study of Chinese religion is undergoing' stresses that culture - and I would add religion -

is neither a single ideology nor a single social group identity disseminated across the society to unite diverse communities. Rather, culture is presumed to involve the internal generation of both distinction and unities, and its holism is described as a function of either underlying structures of some sort or the imposed limits of geography as they moderate the degrees of similarity and difference (Bell 1989: 43).

I feel that both Feuchtwang's and Bell's views re-position the anthropological study of 'Chinese' religion to a more interactive terrain in which the temporal and spatial contingency of the anthropological undertaking and the dialectical alternation of **similarities** and **differences** in 'Chinese' religious practices are determined by the location and production of culture and religion in and by specific places.

By stereoscopically ethnographizing *Tudi Gong* in both a rural and an urban context of contemporary Taiwan, personal, community and place-bound identities have been recounted in the form of spatial and temporal narratives. These, I feel, have made the interconnection between the study of place(s) and the understanding of localised histories a feature which seems to have been variously dictated by the sixteen *Tudi Gong* temples sited in the district and by the *Tudi Gong* cult as it is practised, imagined and cited by the people of *Yongxing* village. In the very act of the telling of these stories, the reader has probably become aware that widespread 'Chinese' traditions and parameters are locally created, recreated and embroiled in the senses that people have of their place, their community and their identity.

Ward and Weller

Cultural and religious variations versus uniformities within the Chinese context were cleverly addressed and examined by Ward (1969) in an article first published in 1965 and in Weller's approach (1987) to religion and culture in Taiwan. I wish briefly to present these two outstanding contributions which, I feel, have the potential of further repositioning the topic addressed so far.

By elaborating on an article published by Levi-Strauss in 1953⁴¹ and on her own ethnographic data collected among Cantonese speaking boat dwellers (*Tanka*) in the community of *Kau Sai*, Ward suggests that

the people of Kau Sai appear to have three different kinds of model of Chinese social arrangements in their consciousness. First there is their own notion of their own social and

⁴¹ Levi-Strauss, C. 1953. Social structure. In *Anthropology today* (ed.) A. L. Kroeber. Chicago: University Press.

cultural system; this, again following Levi-Strauss, we called the **home-made model**; possibly for scientific use the term **immediate model** might be more acceptable. Second, there is their version of what they believe to have been the traditional literati system; this we named the **believed-in traditional model**, or, better because of wider applicability, the **ideological model**. It acts for them as their measure of what is truly Chinese, and wherever it is relevant it is, and has been, used as a corrective for their immediate model and so for their actual structure. Then, third, there are the various models they have constructed of the socio-cultural arrangements of other Chinese groups. These are called **internal observers' models**. As a type they differ from observers' models proper (i.e. the models constructed by outsiders, including social scientists) only in that they are held by people who consider themselves members of the same wider society with those whom they are observing (Ward 1969: 135).

The 'sense of Chineseness' is explained in spatial and temporal terms:

what the people of one locality or time in the vast territory and history of the Chinese people think of as 'Chinese' may not necessarily be recognized as such by Chinese people elsewhere (Ward 1969: 114)

which leads to the key-point being the 'shared imagination' that there is a Chinese culture in the several conscious models people construct:

even within a single village there can be quite marked distinction between the conscious models carried by different sections of the population; yet each section, though aware of the difference, calls its own conscious model 'Chinese.' In other words there is not one conscious model but several (Ward 1969: 114).

Do these various models, I ask, underlie various degrees of *Chineseness*? Who, if this is the case, sets the boundaries of what is Chinese and non-Chinese? Can the senses of *Chineseness* change, multiply and overlap with the changing senses of place, community and identity people experience in their personal and collective narratives? To what extent does 'place' dictate such a process in the very production of meanings which people as agents continuously generate?

Weller's (1987: 144) argument points out that ethnographic data collected on the Universal Salvation Festival suggest to him that different groups (or the same people in different contexts) in Taiwan use different styles of interpretation to explain ritual practices (if they attempt to explain at all). These interpretations may vary as social conditions change. The focus on unity and/or

diversity in Chinese religion may shift depending on the social relations and interpretations of its participants. As Bell highlights, for Weller

the important questions no longer center on a fundamental unity or diversity in Chinese religion and culture but, rather on which style of interpretation is used by which group, under what circumstances, and why (Bell 1989: 51).

Weller also suggests that there seem to be two styles of producing meaning in the Chinese religious context. Pragmatic styles of interpretation are active, personal, and context-bound in nature, the ideologized ones (institutional and systematic) are more passive and impersonal. While the former stress the activity of gods and ghosts, the latter are more concerned with ethics and psychological themes. The poles of these interpretations are popular religion, on one side, and state, monastic and official religion on the other. These poles, however, interrelate to a considerable degree. Weller, in fact, writes that

pragmatic and ideologized interpretations characterize everyone, and are constantly developing into and out of each other... Pragmatic and ideologized interpretations are two ways of giving meaning to experience, not two structured codes of thought (Weller 1987: 10-1).

The persisting creation and re-creation of religious interpretation seems to merge also the dichotomies between great and little traditions as well as elite and folk framework. These can be replaced by a wide range of modes of interpretations which extend beyond and across traditions as well as classes, thus also breaking Weller's own distinction between the peasant, the religious specialist, and the elite.⁴²

Ward's models and Weller's styles of interpretations, which in my view complement each other, reposition rather convincingly the debate on unity and diversity in Chinese religion by offering anthropologists various insights for a more adequate approach to religion in Chinese contexts. What they conjecturally seem to propose is that anthropologists should pay more attention in their analyses to the multilocation of people and places. What makes places and people similar and/or

⁴² See also Johnson, D. 1985. Communication, class, and consciousness in late Imperial China. In *Popular culture in late Imperial China* (eds.) D. Johnson, A. J. Nathan, and E. S. Rawski. Berkley: University of California Press. Johnson constructs a chart of nine social groups and their distinctive consciousness. In this chart he specifies three levels of socio-political dominance (legally privileged, self sufficient, and dependent) and three levels of education (classically educated, literate, and illiterate). Bell points out that Johnson's main argument is that '*Chinese cultural unity can be seen as a particular relationship of parts: that is, social levels are differentiated and linked not by specific ideas or institutions, but through the internal dynamics by which each group defines itself vis-à-vis the others*' (Bell 1988: 47).

different can be discerned by the observer in the variegated array of ways specific people tell and re-tell stories about their personal and community everyday life.

In this vein, I wish to stress that my own understanding of contemporary Taiwanese society suggests that people have a continuous desire to 'build up' a 'network of human relationships and reciprocity' - which, indeed, can be viewed as one of the functions of *Tudi Gong* cults - in an atmosphere of *renqingwei* 人情味 (human touch, friendliness and hospitality). This makes the boundaries between traditions, classes, generations, gender, and rural/urban locales, rather flexible.

Flexibility, however, does not entail the suppression of the above boundaries but a manifold remaking of them to suit the contemporary social change. In the very process of remaking and strategically adapting to them, however, they become more docile. Tradition as religion, in other words, is not suppressed or reinforced but adapted, questioned, manipulated in 'concrete' places and among 'concrete' people who may interpret themselves and the world they inhabit in ways which cannot readily be generalised in clear-cut systems of reference and classification.

In addition, my fieldwork in the city of *Taipei* seems to show that the cult of *Tudi Gong* also questions the very notion of 'ethnicity' and its carrier, the notion of 'religion' (Feuchtwang 1991: 160). There is, I noticed during my fieldwork, a substantial *interaction of sub-ethnicities*⁴³ around the cult of *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan, which is re-making 'territorial' boundaries and senses of 'belonging' among these groups increasingly interactive.

It is, however, in the memories of the past, especially of elderly people, that these differences are recollected as they refer to continuous fights among these groups in order to take possession of the best land and water resources on the island.⁴⁴ For these people, the 'past' becomes a (nostalgic) place which tends to function as a source of belonging and attachment to one's own sub-ethnic group. Generally, younger generations do not seem to be affected by (or to know about, in most cases) such sub-ethnic affiliative rivalries. My frequent asking whether they were *Zhangzhou* or *Quanzhou* would leave them rather puzzled, *'I will tell you! I have to ask my parents.'*

As a concluding note to this part, I wish to emphasise to the reader that in my study on *Tudi Gong*, I have not engaged in a comparative analysis of the cult among the various sub-ethnic groups which compose contemporary Taiwanese society. According to several Taiwanese scholars and my own ethnographic data, the current situation, which portrays a high degree of interaction among people, seems to show that differentiation in the practice of *Tudi Gong* cults are based on **place/locality** and not on **kinship/ethnicity**. *Tudi Gong*, in fact, 'serves localities not kinship

⁴³ By sub-ethnicities, I refer here to the various groups of belonging which characterise Taiwanese society: *Hakka*, *Hokkien*, *Mainlanders*, *Aborigines* and *Zhangzhou* and *Quanzhou* people.

⁴⁴ For an answer to the question whether there is differentiation in social traditions and practices between *Zhangzhou* and *Quanzhou* people in contemporary Taiwan see Lin Mei-Rong (1992a: 195-7)

groups' (Wolf 1974: 135). Although I am aware that some differences have existed between, for example, *Minnan* and *Hakka* people regarding *Tudi Gong* cults and temples (the most common being the absence of the *Tudi Gong* statue in *Hakka* temples), they do not seem to be symptomatic of a clear-cut differential tradition in today's Taiwan, but rather a merging of traditions and practices. My leaning towards this interpretation, however, does not exclude the possibility that differentiation may still exist between these sub-ethnic groups. I prefer to leave this question open to further research which should also include China mainland and an analysis of the historical patterns of settlement both on the island and on the continent.

On representations and resemblances: the religious pantheon and the social landscape

The idea has been put forward that there is some kind of resemblance between the Chinese religious pantheon, and its distinction between 'gods, ghosts, and ancestors,' and the social landscape of traditional China (Jordan 1972; Feuchtwang 1974; Wolf 1974; Ahern 1981; Sangren 1987; Weller 1987). Wolf stresses that

prominent in this landscape were first the mandarins, representing the emperor and the empire; second, the family and the lineage, and third, the more heterogeneous category of the stranger and the outsider, the bandit and the beggar. The mandarins became the gods; the senior members of the line and the lineage, the ancestors; while the stranger was preserved in the form of the dangerous and despised ghosts (Wolf 1974: 175).

Also for Taiwan, Weller writes that explicit comparisons are stressed 'of ancestors, gods and ghosts to kinsmen, bureaucrats and outsiders' (Weller 1987: 23).⁴⁵ This view, which has largely informed the study of Chinese religion in the western academic arena, seems to be losing its relevance if applied in the context of contemporary Taiwan. The changing social landscape on the island is, I suggest, challenging the acclaimed resemblance between the Chinese supernatural and earthly landscape.

A first consideration which I wish to bring forward is that the 'traditional' role of the state, as a legitimate bridge between the human realm and the supernatural realm, is challenged when the government is not seen as authoritative or, in Chinese terms, when it 'loses the Mandate of Heaven.' One may venture to say that traditionally the ruling class stressed religious unity for economic and political reasons and kept order in society through a hierarchically organised social system which reflected the heavenly bureaucracy. On the other hand, the masses, through a multivocal interpretation of popular religion, have never completely accepted secular power and domination. In fact,

⁴⁵ The boundaries of the three-way supernatural category and its reflection of the earthly social order have some degree of flexibility and ambiguity which should not be neglected. An example is the passage of supernatural beings from one category to another, as described by Harrell (1974).

the widely shared heavenly bureaucracy, for example, helps make secular politics seem more natural and beyond questioning. Yet analysis of the Universal Salvation festival shows attempts at religious domination could fail (Weller 1987: 142).

Also Buddhism and Taoism, which adopted a policy of submission to the ruling class, were capable 'of acting on occasion as inspirers of rebellion' (Freedman 1974: 35). The religious sects in China as well as in Taiwan were often associated with political violence, and have been blamed by the Chinese authorities as 'heterodox religious ideologies for inciting people to act against the government' (Weller 1982: 462).⁴⁶ As a result it clearly appears that 'religion for the elite was, in part an aspect of government, presented in the most orthodox light' (Weller 1987: 139).⁴⁷

In today's Taiwan, the demise of the one-party regime and its concomitant process of democratisation and political participation, combined with a certain widespread discontent towards the ruling class, offer a fertile ground in which to question the validity and efficacy of the notion of resemblance.

Wolf argued that 'people with different perspectives can interpret the supernatural hierarchy in different ways' (Wolf 1974: 137). In contemporary Taiwan, there seems to be a considerable degree of flexibility, variation and manipulation in the way different people interpret the supernatural hierarchy. This very much depends on the changing socio-political-economic circumstances of the individual as well as communities. The resemblance between the

⁴⁶ See also Bosco (1994b).

⁴⁷ Attempts to define terms as 'elite' and 'folk/peasant' in the context of Chinese religions have been various. It has been suggested that the distinction between 'elite' and 'folk' in Chinese religions may be seen as an indigenous viewpoint. Freedman following Yang's study of Chinese religion points out that 'when an educated Chinese, writing about Chinese religion as though from the outside, says that a rational agnosticism characterises the elite and an indiscriminate superstition the masses, he is in reality writing from the inside and expressing the elite's view of the difference between the two great layers of society' (Freedman 1974: 38). Bell (1989: 54) suggests that such distinctions were created and stressed in specific periods of Chinese history as a way of ordering experience and supporting a hierarchical social system. Elite culture and peasant culture have been regarded by western scholars more as versions of each other than as two separated and opposing aspects of Chinese religion. From different perspectives, the sinologists de Groot and Granet have emphasised some kind of developmental unity of Chinese religion. While the former argues in his ethnographic accounts that the elite form of religion degenerated into the superstitious practices of the peasant religion, the latter, who bases his theoretical approach on Durkheim, sees the development of elite religion from a peasant culture. Even though these two poles are in opposition, the continuum is maintained and developed by evolution of religious forms throughout history, the first *from the top down*, the second *from the bottom up*. Yang and Freedman ground this unity 'not in a historical source or a single social stratum, but in a common system of religious ideas nourished by a regular exchange of ideas and practices between the elite and peasant populations' (Bell 1989: 40-1).

supernatural order and the earthly social order, more applicable to Imperial China (but still not a total parallel!) than to the current Taiwanese society, is softened by the assumption that in the context of Taiwan religion and its rituals are not just passive reflections, but also in part constitutive of social activity and structure. In a recent book, Shahar and Weller stress that

Chinese heavens were neither a passive metaphor for China's political order nor a simple reification of its social hierarchy. Rather, the heavens expressed and negotiated the tensions within society. Chinese gods did mirror the existing order in some ways, but they also shaped it, compensated for it, and changed it. They participated in the dynamics of power and struggles over identity that characterized China as much as any other society (Shahar & Weller 1996: 3).

Shahar and Weller (1996: 1-36) also indicate that the two-way interpretation of the supernatural realm and its resembling of the earthly social and political order has shifted through time. With regard to the post-war Taiwanese context, popular religion has also served as a node-point of Taiwanese identity vis-à-vis the Mainlander-run government.⁴⁸ Mainlanders, on the whole, do not concern themselves with folk religion, partly because they have become divorced from a social setting which sustains continued ritual activity. The Taiwan case suggests, in fact, that one is dealing with a selected and, to a certain degree, re-invented tradition in which place-based cults play an important role in stressing a Taiwanese culture and identity. There is, I feel, an ongoing tension and an overlapping view of what is sensed to be 'Chinese' and/or 'Taiwanese' folk religion. The way that, in this thesis, I am employing terms like 'Chinese' and 'Taiwanese' expresses, haphazardly, this conflicting sense, which goes beyond indigenous views to encompass anthropological theory and practice. One of the voices which has been raised with respect to this last point stresses that

... American anthropologists and mainland Chinese in Taiwan were not interested in Taiwanese culture. They seemed to be looking at us, but were really looking through us to try to see traditional Chinese culture without seeing us, our culture, or our historical experiences. ... It was immediately obvious to me that published fieldwork in Taiwan presented Taiwanese culture as Chinese culture' (Murray & Hong 1991: 273)

By investigating *Tudi Gong* cults my intention has not been that of looking for some kind of 'traditional Chinese culture' in the Taiwanese context, but to represent the specificities and practices of the cult in a place which, after the Chinese revolution of 1949, has become the only

⁴⁸ See section above, *Place, social change and senses of community and identity*.

available 'ground' - with Hong Kong - on which anthropologists have continued to research on 'Chinese culture.' The Taiwan soil seems to be claiming an 'independent' place and voice in the academic arena, without, however, cutting itself from its Chinese 'cultural' roots. Anthropologists have to be aware that selected and re-invented traditions with specific place-bound connotations do not only refer to the people of Taiwan, but also, hopefully, to the changing senses of anthropology towards Taiwan.⁴⁹

It has been suggested that the dichotomy between religion and society, which mainly characterises western societies, is conspicuous by its absence in Chinese religions. This assumption is echoed in the work of Granet (1977) who emphasises the fact that in China religion, like law, cannot be regarded as a separated function of social activity.

Weller stresses that '*... informants at all levels of society explain god worship as a metaphor for politics*' (Weller 1987: 37). Saso points out that '*in studying Chinese religion outsiders are always impressed by the remarkable identification of religious life and social life*' (Saso 1982: 599). He continues by stressing that this is true for any Chinese community in the world.

Although this can be acceptable in its general terms, in practice there may be a certain degree of variable intensity, depending on the particular socio-political and economic circumstances in which a specific community finds itself in time and place. The case of Taiwan seems to suggest that Saso's assumption, which Freedman had already investigated in the context of China mainland, is reasonably acceptable.⁵⁰ In fact, '*despite modernization, religion in Taiwan has not undergone secularization, as has Christianity in the West. Being 'secular' by its very nature, Chinese religion can coexist with a modern society without major changes*' (Saso 1982: 600).

Although I am inclined to agree with Saso's view, the contemporary situation in Taiwan seems to problematize to a certain degree the unity between secular and religious. The socio-political and economic changes occurring on the island, the impact of consumerism, the rise of new Chinese religions (e. g. Japan) are all factors which have affected and are affecting especially the younger generations. This may be a relevant sampling ground for analysing and foreseeing, perhaps, a

⁴⁹ *Free China Review* (vol. 44, no. 2, February 1994) published a *Special Section on Taiwan Studies*. On this issue see also Schmutz 1989. *La sociologie taiwanaise, 1957-1987. Revue Européenne des Sciences Sociales XXVII*, No. 84, 87-120, and Lin Mei-Rong (1992a).

⁵⁰ Freedman argued that Chinese religion was to a certain extent a civil religion '*not austere and cunningly calculated to serve political interests, but based upon a view of the interpenetration of society and the universe, and upon a conception of authority that in the last analysis would not allow the religious to separate off from the secular. Caesar was Pope, Pope Caesar*' (Freedman 1974: 40). Here, one may ask if this has not been the case with religion in pre-capitalist eras?

decrease in the practice of popular religion, despite recent attempts by local communities to revitalise local cultures and, therefore, religious practices. A Taiwanese scholar told me that ***'the damage has already been done. The education promoted by the Guomindang, the Nationalist party, is to some extent responsible for the fact that youngsters do not know much about popular religion and local cultures.'***

A strict control over education and the use of language characterised both the Japanese occupation of Taiwan (1895-1945) and especially the period of mainlander-dominant Nationalist government. In school textbooks Taiwan was represented as a mere appendix to the Japanese empire before 1945, and to China mainland, after 1945. In other words, education aimed to place students in the imagined space of China, not Taiwan. A middle-aged woman returning to the village of *Yongxing* for a few days told me that

the education we received started from locating China mainland, its rivers and mountains... It should have started from locating my school, my house, my village, the neighbouring villages... Language also played a detrimental role in constructing our own identity. Until the age of five/six we used to speak Taiwanese at home, then we went to school and had to start with the Bopomofo and give an image to the Chinese characters we saw on the blackboard. How could I explain to my mother what I had learned at school?⁵¹

Although in today's Taiwan there is a growing awareness of local languages and cultures (a kind of re-appropriation of one's own place!), the extent to which Taiwanese popular religion will survive, despite the restrictions imposed on it over the last one-hundred years and the social changes currently occurring, cannot be confidently anticipated.

My ethnographic data seem to suggest that it is becoming more prevalent, especially among young people and city dwellers, to put a stress on the relational and personal connection and interpretation of *Tudi Gong* who can be identified as the product of an 'imagined' relationship with Him or with whom/what He may represent. I wonder whether this can be attributed to a certain 'loosening up' of ties with one's place, community and identity as a result of the widespread process of social mobilisation in contemporary Taiwan. Moreover, one can also speculate as to whether such a phenomenon can refer to an ongoing process of changing values and attitudes catalysed by Taiwan's rapid modernisation and position in the wider globalized culture with its tendency, ambiguous and contradictory, to both 'level' and 'individualise' community and identity.

⁵¹ *Bopomofo* is a phonetic system employed in Taiwan.

The various 'hints' presented above have, to a certain extent, challenged the resemblance between the Chinese religious pantheon and the social landscape of traditional China in the context of contemporary Taiwan. As a concluding 'hint,' I wish to suggest that the resemblance between the earthly and supernatural world and its tripartite distinction in '*gods, ancestors and ghosts*' may more appropriately show its metaphorical significance if approached from the perspective of place and senses of place. I feel, in fact, that the way people in Taiwan supposedly 'imagine' and explain '*gods, ancestors and ghosts*' may be indicative of the Chinese experience of attachment and belonging to place.⁵²

Gods, and *Tudi Gong* in particular, generally portray local characteristics; they are celebrated territorially and they are representative of the people they are supposedly protecting. Temples, rituals and socio-cultural activities associated with them, generate and strengthen a sense of place, community and identity among the people whose place they inhabit. *Ancestors* also have a special bond with a territorially defined place. They occupy a suitable location and are buried in the land/earth. I have often heard elderly Chinese living in Taiwan say that they wish to be buried in the land of their place of origin. The land of their ancestors is a representation of stability and continuity and it is imagined as the right location for their own burial and location in the afterlife. Furthermore, the cult of the ancestors has played an important role in the Chinese experience of a sense continuity between the land and the place-based living family and community, thus creating a sense of being Chinese with a specific place-bound identity.

People's attachment and belonging to place is, then, defined in terms of 'territory/locality' (地緣), characterised by territorial guardian gods, and in terms of 'descent' (血緣), exemplified by ancestors.⁵³ Feuchtwang stresses that

all over China there are settlements in which one or two surnames are dominant. In southeastern China, descent was frequently the organizing principle of the whole nucleated settlement; lineage are often also the lineage segments. But even in the lineage villages of southeastern China, where ancestral halls are the focal points of the sense of place, the

⁵² In the introduction *Place and senses of place*, I have introduced Soja's idea of the nodality and peripheralness of social life. I wonder whether it would be possible to detect the extent to which local deities and their temples create a sense of real and/or imagined nodality and whether this corresponds to administrative and economic centres. There also seems to be a fascinating parallel between Chinese deities' spatial and hierarchical differentiation - and, thus, creation of nested and overlapping territories they take care of - and the way people, conjecturally, imagine their place as multilevelled and hierarchical territories and localities, in this life as well as in the afterlife.

⁵³ On this important issue, see especially Feuchtwang (1998) and Chun (1985).

territorial principal still has its own ceremonial focus in shrines to guardian gods, or on occasion when a founding or legendary ancestor is celebrated as a territorial guardian.

In settlements where there is no dominant surname, territorial guardian gods are the principle focus of the definition and identity of a traditional place, but ancestral worship, genealogy and the care of graves do not for that reason cease to function as foci for a sense of origin and belonging (Feuchtwang 1998: 54).

Given the configuration of settlements on the island, the case of contemporary Taiwan seems to put a stress on *diyuan* 地緣 rather than *xueyuan* 血緣,⁵⁴ on territorial guardian gods, rather than ancestral halls as foci for a sense of place, community and identity. This phenomenon has been given more consistency by radical and frequent processes of migration which have occurred over the last few decades.

Ghosts, on the other hand, are imagined as 'homeless,' 'wandering,' without a fixed place and, thus, dangerous.⁵⁵ They constitute a threat to the 'order of things' because, potentially, they can subvert people's sense of place, community and identity. Unlike gods and ancestors who have to be honoured, ghosts have to be propitiated (Wolf 1974). Weller, commenting on Wolf's study points out that ghosts are '*metaphors for people who do not occupy proper positions in the social structure*' (Weller 1987: 62).⁵⁶ In this regard, the contemporary experience of space/place, in which dis-placement and alienation seem to be a recurrent theme, makes the *ghost* category quite common in Taiwan. The establishment of innumerable temples (often associated with gangsters and criminals activities) listed under the *Youying Gong* rank (see chapter four) might even suggest a lack of a sense of place, community and identity as well as an abnegation of or ignorance about *Tudi Gong* cults and temples and other territorial guardian gods.

⁵⁴ For a wider and well orchestrated critical discussion of such issues, the reader may refer to Chun's thesis (1985), especially chapter eight, 377-99.

⁵⁵ Not all ghosts, however, are considered dangerous. Some are just pitiable.

⁵⁶ In this regard, the *Fang Jun - Shou Jun* ritual presented in chapter four is an illustrative example.

6.4 Summary.

By employing and integrating a 'triple' perspective - which is that of my 'raconteurs,' that of several scholars of Chinese religion and Taiwanese society, and that generated from my own approach - this chapter has aimed to highlight for the reader the degree to which the relative valencies of 'Chinese' cultural continuity can be - and have been - reformulated in the encounter with the historical and topographical specificities and conjunctures characterising contemporary Taiwanese society. The ways *Tudi Gong* cults and *senses of place, community and identity* have been practised, adapted and imagined in today's Taiwan have furnished privileged ontological and epistemological platforms from which to engage in such analyses.

In the first part of this chapter, I have focused on the 'logics' of *Tudi Gong*'s localised practices and representations through an exploration of some cultural traditions and parameters which, from the ethnographic information presented in the previous chapters, seem to be particularly related to the 'functions' and 'connotations' of *Tudi Gong* on the island. In the second part, I have attempted to locate the cult of *Tudi Gong* in the context of some of the ongoing debates on Chinese religion(s). It has been argued that *Tudi Gong* cults, temples and representations seem to reflect the dialectical relationship between a reinforcement and desire of a sense of place, community and identity - and religious practices - and a certain general sense of Chineseness. Labelling oneself as Chinese (我是中國人) does not preclude acknowledgement of and affiliation with the specificity of the place one comes from and the distinctiveness of local religious traditions and social practices (see above, Ward 1969). This sense of Chineseness, in fact, may be felt stronger in the encounter with non-Chinese, but it can also be substantially re-framed in the social interaction with 'Chinese' living elsewhere. The case of mainlanders living on Taiwan who say that their sense of being Taiwanese has strengthened after their first visit to mainland China, may be indicative in this regard.

In addition, by focusing on the resemblance between the Chinese religious pantheon and the social landscape, I have stressed the degree of selection and re-invention of Chinese tradition(s) in the context of Taiwan in which, for example, local practices associated with *Tudi Gong* - and other deities - can contribute towards constructing a distinctive sense of attachment and belonging to one's own place.

Though I view this chapter as a preliminary attempt, the questions that have been raised are indicative of the relevance that a study of *Tudi Gong*, coupled with the notion of place, has generated with regard to the Taiwanese senses of place, community and identity. The hypothetical stance with which I have proceeded throughout this chapter, which, inter alia, I viewed as the result of the fluid interplay of tradition(s) and social change(s), has also furnished further topics and questions which I wish to investigate in my future research.

The risk one is confronted with in such kinds of analysis is that of generalising or advocating, in the name of some Chinese 'collective consciousness,' the significance of some kind of underlying and structural unity (see above, Bourdieu 1989: 124) of cultural traditions and parameters among the Chinese. However, if the reader positions this speculative part in the context of the ethnographic information presented in the previous chapters, he or she will probably agree with me that these recurrent themes characterise specific everyday stories of people and places, including anthropologists' own stories. Stories which, in the very act of being told, continuously attempt to make sense, in different ways but simultaneously, of ourselves and our places.

***Re-telling stories about the authority of Tudi Gong and place:
retrospectives and prospectives***

***Tudi Gong and place:
the inspiration of place***

***Tudi Gong and place as locale:
the agency of place***

***Tudi Gong and place as territory:
the authorisation of place***

***Tudi Gong and place as locality:
the durability of place***

***Tudi Gong and place as location:
the congruence of place***

***Tudi Gong and place as community and identity:
the practice, ambiguities and contradictions of place***

***Tudi Gong and place as senses of place:
the personality and power of place***

***The anthropologist as Tudi Gong:
the 'author'ity of place***

You ask what they 'mean' ('veulent' dire)? I'll tell them to you again.

*...it is a way of re-telling the consequences and combinations of formal operations, along with an art of 'harmonizing' them with the circumstances and with the audience. The story does not express a practice. It does not limit itself to telling about a movement. It **makes** it. One understands it, then, if one enters into this movement oneself...*

*de Certeau*¹

Tudi Gong and place:

the inspiration of place

As the main title states, this concluding part intends to position, retrospectively, the different 'forces,' 'orientations' and 'sightings' which have characterised the chapters of this thesis. At the same time, it also wishes to indicate, in a speculative manner, various perspectives which my dual focus on *Tudi Gong* and *place* seem to have generated during my ethnographic process.

Like air-force pilots who learn to use their eyes independently,² I feel that at the outset of my research I was affected by a sort of methodological squint - positing an eye on *Tudi Gong*, the other on *place* - which, I was afraid, would lead me towards opposing and dichotomous ethnographic and theoretical routes. This concern, however, was to diminish considerably as soon as I put 'my feet on the ground.' The variegated array of *stories* I was told during fieldwork about *Tudi Gong*, His temples and cults, and the places in which He is sited, were to intermingle very often in the *senses of place and memories of the past* of the people of contemporary Taiwan.

As in the field, then, *Tudi Gong* and *place* have intersected remarkably and in different ways and to different degrees in the *stories* I have told in this ethnographic account. In this regard, Ryden writes that

¹ These opening quotations are from de Certeau (1988: 80-1).

² American pilots of Apache helicopters are trained to posit their eyes, simultaneously and independently, on two 'fields of vision': one being the territory over which the pilot is flying, the other the information visually displayed on the inner side of the visor. (This has been related to me by Claudio Modonutti and Sergio Targa).

the sense of place achieves its clearest articulation through narrative, providing the thematic drive and focus for the stories that people tell about the places in their lives. These stories need not be limited to any one medium, for both folk and literary narratives about place bear a striking thematic and stylistic family resemblance; they are simply manifestations in two different media of the same narrative impulse (Ryden 1993: XIV).

In this vein, the ethnographic account I have presented to the reader narrates the stories about *Tudi Gong* and *place* which have been told both by my raconteurs and by myself. As in the field so in the text, the voices behind these stories have gradually fused in an attempt, as I myself wrote in chapter two of this thesis, to

let these stories of people and places become merged, at a specific time and place, with my own personal story and 'set sail.' In this way, I would initiate an anthropological journey that would have, as an intermediary place, my ethnographic account. This would rather take the form of a 'rapportage,' the writing about the changing and continuous intermingling of the narratives of specific people, places and their Tudi Gongs with my own.

The interconnection between *Tudi Gong* and *place*, in addition, has also inspired a theoretical process of reflexivity on various key terms which, in my view, exemplify and expand on the very notion of place. As presented in the part *Place and senses of place* in the introductory section, these key terms are *locale, territory, locality, location, community, identity* and *sense of place*. The reader has already familiarised him/herself with such terms which I have often employed in this thesis.

In the following pages, the notion of place and its key associated terms will be repositioned once again through the ethnographic data and theoretical insights presented in the previous chapters. My intent is to highlight topics which may challenge anthropology to reassess the position of an *anthropology of place* in the discipline at a time in which the *voice of place* is gaining a more consistent intensity among anthropologists.³ I wish to stress, however, that having been more interested in the process rather than the product, in the journey being made rather than the reaching of a final destination, these revisited trajectories do not claim to be definitive. They have the potential for generating further research on both *Tudi Gong* and *place*. Their explorative nature

³ See, among others, Olwig & Hastrup (1997) and Gupta & Ferguson (1997). With reference to 'place' in Chinese contexts, I wish to draw the attention of the reader to recent studies by Wang Ming-Ming (1995) and Feuchtwang (1998). In addition, the reader can refer to the first part of my chapter three: *From the vantage point of hindsight: reflecting on the first two chapters*.

also conveys, in my view, the changing character of *place and senses of place*, both mine and of my raconteurs, and the spatial and temporal contingency of anthropologists' ethnographic process.

Tudi Gong and place as locale:

the agency of place

The term *locale*, as one of the connotations of the notion of place, has already been assessed in the introductory part *Place and senses of place*. As a heuristic term, it has offered valuable theoretical ground from which to expand towards notions of *territory* and *locality*. Despite its limitations,⁴ the view of *locale* as 'a place for social interactions' (Agnew 1987: 28; Giddens 1993: 118) has proved to be, from my ethnographic data, an embedded and intrinsic characteristic of *Tudi Gong* temples and cults. In chapter six I wrote that

my own understanding of contemporary Taiwanese society suggests that people have a continuous desire to 'build up' a 'network of human relationships and reciprocity' - which, indeed, can be viewed as one of the functions of Tudi Gong cults - in an atmosphere of renqingwei 人情味 (human touch, friendliness and hospitality).

In addition, *Tudi Gong* also inspires the creation of 'associations' (會), His temples often become meeting points in which, formally and especially informally, the life of the village or the neighbourhood is recounted and kept up to date, cultural and social activities are planned and the religious life of the of the community finds its centre and inspiration.⁵

In these contexts, *Tudi Gong* temples have offered an arena in which to position myself as anthropologist, thus allowing me to establish and nurture friendly and productive social relations, and listen to the local stories of people and places in which the various *Tudi Gong* temples were sited. With reference to the active role of place in people's practice of everyday life, in chapter three I wrote that

I proceed from the basic assumption that there is a dialectical and ongoing relationship between people and places and that spatial practices shape and are shaped by the social and spatial characteristics of the specific places in which they happen.

⁴ *Locale*, in fact, does not convey, in my view, the theoretical multivocality embedded in the notion of place. See also Agnew (1987) and Rodman (1992).

⁵ The reader may refer especially to the ethnography presented in chapters one and two of this thesis.

This continuous dialectical interplay portrays place as an active generator of meaning and practice - an aspect of place which is often taken for granted or underestimated in social analysis - and not, merely, as passive receptacle of human and societal activities.

Place, as 'a generator of meaning and practice' (thus 'the agency of place') has, I proposed in chapter three, led me to speculate on the degree to which the specific *places* and *cultures* anthropologists study can shape, perhaps dictate, the style and tenor of their ethnographic writings. In this regard, Wyckoff (1994), in his review of Ryden's book (1993), notes that the author's

central argument is that places are important not because they are mappable in space but because they create meaning⁶ for people, an 'invisible landscape' that is best explored by seeing how people integrate the particularities of place into their local folklore and their shared history of a locality (Wyckoff 1994: 496).

Such creation of meaning, however, is multiform. As in Chinese cartography, physical space is invested 'with deep, multivalent cultural meaning' (Smith 1996: 2) which varies according to the spatial and temporal vantage point of the viewer.⁷ As Rodman stressed, '*places have multiple meanings that are constructed spatially... Rather than places becoming exemplars of **our** concepts, they should be seen as, to varying degrees, socially constructed products of **others'** interests (material as well as ideational) and as mnemonics of **others'** experiences*' (Rodman 1992: 641.644). These, in turn, I suggest, should be allowed to merge with the anthropologist's own interests and experiences both in the *field* and in the *text*. My own experience in the field and my ethnographic writing has hopefully related to the reader my attempt to merge stories of people and places with my own.

An anthropological stress on *place* as *locale* (the setting for contextualised social interactions) has the potential, I feel, to reduce the distance between *us/them* and, in Fabian's words, 'to

⁶ Emphasis added.

⁷ Smith explains that 'one of the many distinctive features of Chinese cartography is its use of variable perspective. Generally speaking, traditional Chinese concepts of space emphasized a dynamism and fluidity that depended heavily on shifting vantage points and relativistic considerations of time. This attitude differed fundamentally from that of the West, where from about AD 1500 onward cartographers conceived of space as bounded, static, and therefore organizable and measurable... As with traditional Chinese landscape paintings, which generally lack a single fixed point of reference in order to allow the viewer greater freedom in appreciating the scene, topographical maps often require the reader to change orientation as his or her eyes move across the surface' (Smith 1996: 3).

transform ethnography into a praxis capable of making the Other present (rather than making representations predicated on the other's absence)' (Fabian 1990: 771).⁸

Tudi Gong and place as territory:

the authorisation of place

The notion of *territory* has emerged markedly in my ethnography of *Tudi Gong* in contemporary Taiwan. As I wrote in chapter one, my finding about the detailed territories of each *Tudi Gong* temple in *Datong* district started from the basic assumption that

Tudi Gong seems to function as a guardian and protector of people and places. With reference to place, I started to investigate the way Tudi Gong temples would delineate their own territories and how these would interact with the administrative organisation and boundary of the current Datong district.

The representations of *Tudi Gong* as 'guardian' of people and places, as 'spy' and 'recorder' of events occurring among individuals and communities He protects, as 'controller' of the ghosts and His associated functions of delimiting and purifying His own territory⁹ have all implicitly involved those connotations often associated with the notion of territory such as of sovereignty, property, discipline, surveillance and jurisdiction (Soja 1989: 150).¹⁰

Particularly, the various *Tudi Gong* temples in *Datong* district have exhibited their own specific territories which cover the whole extension of the district. No place seems to be sited outside the protective power of a *Tudi Gong*. Even roads and the neighbouring *Danshui* river are guarded, jointly, by the adjacent *Tudi Gongs*.

⁸ Fabian's aim is based on his view that '*in ethnography as we know it, the Other is displayed, and therefore contained, as an object of representation; the Other's voice, demands, teaching are usually absent from our theorizing*' (Fabian 1990: 771).

⁹ The reader may especially refer to chapters one, four and five.

¹⁰ In this part, I am specially referring to the territories created by the *Tudi Gong* temples as foci for community worship. In chapter four, I have indicated various other 'territories' over which *Tudi Gong* extends His protective power and in chapter five (see *Iconographic representations of Tudi Gong*) I have engaged in a discussion of the 'hierarchical' overlapping, or otherwise, of these territories.

The boundaries of the temples are drawn not according to the administrative subdivisions (*li* and *lin*) and boundaries of the district, but according to roads.¹¹

The notion of territory calls into play the question of boundaries.¹² How and by whom have these boundaries been created? Why do they not refer to the administrative subdivisions and boundaries of the district? To what do they then refer?

I intend to expand on these questions by putting forward the division that Lightfoot suggests between 'ad hoc' and 'ontic' regions.¹³

Ad hoc regions are artificial and contrived, imposed or invented by outside observers according to whatever single-factor variables they choose, however irrelevant those criteria are to the resident of the region. "Ontic regions, on the other hand, owe their existence to geographical, social, or cultural 'facts,' such as mountains, rivers, settlement history, or whatever else, and may or may not have within them corresponding cultural groupings" (Ryden 1993: 69).

Ryden himself, commenting on Lightfoot's *ontic regions* or *folk boundaries*, expresses the view that

such regions, self consciously known and defined by the people within them, may or may not correspond with prominent and visible features on the landscape or with conventional political divisions; what is important is that people themselves know and can point out the boundaries of their regions - the regions are accurately defined only from within, not without, and outside the figurative walls lies unfamiliar and somewhat intimidating terra incognita (Ryden 1993: 69),

¹¹ Two temples, the *Fuan* and the former *Qiansui Fude* (see *Ninth door* route in chapter one) were established because of the interest of two groups of people in physical exercise. These temples are exceptional in not having a specific territory.

¹² As I speculated in the introductory part *Place and senses of place*, the notion of territory also has the potential of informing and being informed by ***the way people 'imagine' the after-life as multi-levelled and hierarchical territories, and the imagined degree of juxtaposition or felt co-presence availability between the 'sensible' world and the 'supernatural' world.*** As briefly indicated in chapter six, Chinese religion is certainly a suitable case for this analysis. In this regard, Casimir notes that *'in all human societies, space is relevant not only under material aspect, but also under religious ones, and territories are conceived of not only for this life, on land or sea, but also for after-life'* (Casimir & Rao 1992: 19).

¹³ I refer, here, to Ryden's (1993: 69) quotation of the article by Lightfoot, W. E. 1983. Regional folkloristics. In *Handbook of American folklore* (ed.) R. M. Dorson. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 186.

and that

*often, these boundaries grow out of patterns of local and communal history: the sense of place ends at the point on the ground where the long story of the past is no longer known, where the land and the **stories** on the other side belong to someone else (Ryden 1993: 69).*

In the light of Lightfoot's concept of 'ad hoc' and 'ontic' regions and Ryden's comments, I wish to suggest that the 'folk boundaries' of the territories of the *Tudi Gong* temples in *Datong* district exemplify the above views in a remarkable manner. In the introduction to chapter one, in fact, I wrote that

my attempt to write a biography of each Tudi Gong temple in Datong district seems to have highlighted the polyphonic dimension already inscribed in old localities such as Dadaocheng and Dalongtong. In other words the district's Tudi Gong temples appear to have captured the voices of an overwhelming number of lesser known and smaller localities which have indeed contributed to the current configuration of the district and of its two main old localities.

Despite several administrative changes over the last one hundred years, the folk boundaries of *Tudi Gong* territories continue to refer, in different ways and to different degrees, to the various localised stories and histories of people and places. What I would like to stress is that although there is a striking difference between *Tudi Gong* territories (Lightfoot's 'ontic regions') and administrative territories (Lightfoot's 'ad hoc' regions), the 'names' of some of the current administrative subdivisions (*li*) are still ascribed to sites which exhibit 'patterns of local and communal history' (Ryden, see above) such as *Yongle li* 永樂里, *Yanping li* 延平里, *Penglai li* 蓬萊里 or *Baoan li* 保安里. This note disputes, to a lesser extent however, Lightfoot's observation but raises a subtle anthropological question: that of the *authorization of place*.

In chapter three I wrote that *the authorization of place, by which I mean the capacity of inscribing and labelling a specific place, is often done by outsiders, by the media and by governmental bodies* and that local people's sense of place has acted, as shown in the same chapter, as a form of resistance to the outside imposed views of their own place. Anthropology, I have suggested, may run the same risk. In fact,

ethnographic writing is not a neutral activity. It contributes, through its own writing, to the authorization and labelling of specific places.

The reader can refer back to chapter three which has considerably elaborated on this issue. In the last part of this chapter, however, I intend to re-pose the question and indicate potential strategies in order to reduce the dichotomy which may surface between what I here have called 'ad hoc' and 'ontic' practices of anthropology.

***Tudi Gong and place as locality:
the durability of place***

Among the various terms I am indicating as embodied in the notion of place, *locality* seems to be the one which, most of all, resists theoretical scrutiny. Painter points out that '*despite, or perhaps because of, considerable debate about the concept, there is no consensus concerning its technical meaning within human geography*' (Painter 1994: 337).

The association of *locality studies* with *community studies* and the interchangeable use of the two terms in academic circles have accentuated a 'static' conception of the term *locality* which has been frequently attached, erroneously, to the term community.¹⁴ In my view, the notion of community and that of locality exhibit distinct theoretical features which can both inform and be informed by the concept of place. Cooke notes that if social scientists are

to move beyond community to a theoretical understanding of change rather than stability, and, in particular, change in a spatial context it is important to consider the possibility that locality is the more appropriate theoretical concept (Cooke 1990: 5).

By positing *localities* in the wider context of the nation, Cooke stresses the social, political and economic intermingling - or otherwise - of the two: '*nations are constituted in terms of the localities they encompass territorially, while localities and, specifically, their members are nationally constituted*' (1990: 13). In addition, the nature of specific localities is the result of the interaction between '*external determining forces*' and '*internal agency effects*' which creates '*a sociospatial construct around which is gathered a significant element of social dynamism that drives forward the development processes of modern society*' (Cooke 1990: 14). In this context, *locality* has the potential of contributing towards understanding social, political and economic changes and their ongoing positioning in their local/global setting and development.

¹⁴ Hence, community is often associated with '*cosy connotations of rootedness, kinship, and common values*' (Cooke 1990: 3), or '*romantic, stable, parochial, repressive and reactionary*' views (Keith & Pile 1993: 120).

Cooke, however, does not seem to consider *locality* in its temporal/historical dimension, nor does he indicate the reasons and the processes through which *localities* can lose - or gain - vigour through time. Localities, in fact, as places are **relatively durable** and, like stories, they can wax and wane. In this context it would be worthwhile to speculate on the degree to which and the ways a once economically flourishing, politically central and socially advanced locality may continue to be represented and remembered in the memories of local inhabitants and whether it can be recreated or re-appropriated in cultural/religious forms.

As an example of these last speculations, I would like to draw the reader's attention to the relationship between the various *Tudi Gong* temples I studied and *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong*, the main two localities sited inside the current administrative boundaries of *Datong* district. In chapter one I wrote that,

during the process of my becoming familiar with Datong district, the locations of the sixteen Tudi Gong temples and their positions in relation to the main roads struck me as very significant ... the map seems to highlight the old localities Dadaocheng and Dalongtong through the positioning of the various Tudi Gong temples.

Several of my raconteurs, to whom I showed the map of the location of the *Tudi Gong* temples in the current *Datong* district would, in fact, unprompted delineate the imagined boundaries of the two old localities. In addition, in chapter four I wrote that,

the position of the five Tudi Gong temples which take part in the Fang Jun - Shou Jun ritual... are somehow located at the boundaries of these two old localities. This view is supported by the connection, which was pointed out to me, between the Fang Jun - Shou Jun ritual with the Anfang 暗訪 processions. The route of the Anfang processions...also seems to show that the boundaries refer more to the old settlements Dadaocheng and Dalongtong than to the actual Datong district as an administrative unit.

Despite the fact that *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong* centrality in the life of *Taipei* has diminished considerably (due to various factors such as urbanisation, social mobilisation, restructuring of the city), these two localities still hold firmly in the memory of the past of some local inhabitants. The positioning of the *Tudi Gong* temples and the ritual activity I have referred to above are but examples of the way the temporal/historical attributes of *localities* can endure, notwithstanding social, political and economic changes, in the personal and collective narratives of people and places. At a time in which the Taiwanese are re-addressing and re-assessing issues of local cultures and histories, the historical dimension of place/locality can become a further viable perspective from which to re-visit one's own personal and collective past.

In the light of my ethnographic reference to *Dadaocheng* and *Dalongtong*, I wish to turn back to Soja's definition of *locality*¹⁵ which, I feel, more thoroughly captures the various connotations of the term and especially its temporal/historical dimension.

Soja has suggested that *localities* 'can be defined as particular types of enduring locales stabilised socially and spatially through the clustered settlement of primary activity sites and the establishment of propinquitous territorial community' (Soja 1989: 151). This spatio-centered definition of *locality* is then unravelled in more temporal and active terms:

like every locale, they are spatio-temporal structurations arising from the combination of human agency and the conditioning impact of pre-existing spatio-temporal conditions. They provide another created setting, a more elaborate built environment, for human interaction expanded in scale, density, social differentiation, and collective attachment to place (Soja 1989: 151-2).

By attempting to write a 'biography' of each *Tudi Gong* temple in the district the past centrality of the two main localities has emerged to a considerable degree and has shown that locality is a *multivocal* phenomenon.¹⁶ Locality, in fact, can be approached as a 'composite' term which can retain its significance (including theoretically) only if viewed from the perspectives of all those 'smaller places' which make up its spatial and temporal configuration and from the differential personal and collective sense of attachment to it.

The concept of *locality* seems to stress that history is one of the determining forces of the concept of place, or in the words of one of the residents of *Datong* district: '*my place is my history.*' The interconnections between people, place and local histories are aptly described by Ryden who writes that,

to live in a place is to see and know what the people who lived there before you did[?] it; to hear talk about a place is to understand what else happened there that has been deemed worth remembering. To live in a place is also to inscribe deeply on its face the paths, patterns, and events of one's own life, phenomena which enter one's own talk. To do all these things - to see, listen, and talk about a place - is to understand and perpetuate the history of a place,

¹⁵ I have already briefly introduced Soja's definition of locality in the Introductory part *Place and senses of place*.

¹⁶ On the question of 'biographies,' see Pred's critique of structuration theory in *Three answers to Giddens' concept of locale* (especially 2), in the introductory part *Place and senses of place*.

history which lives simultaneously on a number of levels and colors the meaning of that place in a number of ways (Ryden 1993: 64).

The implications and prospectives that this opens for the very endeavour of anthropology should not be ignored especially at a time when 'ontological' and 'epistemological' anxieties seem to lean towards 'space more than time.'¹⁷ My own 'anxiety' in my ethnographic writing, however, has been that of re-positioning, from *Tudi Gong* and *place*, the ongoing intermingling of the spatial and temporal dimensions which finds its most suitable authorisation in the *telling of stories* about people and places.

Tudi Gong and place as location:

the congruence of place

The reader has already familiarised him/herself with Agnew's tripartite attempt (*locale*, *location* and *sense of place*) to analyse the notion of place (Agnew 1987: 28). His approach relates a notion of *location* as the result of the interdependence of social and economic processes on a local/global scale, with a clear stress on the determining forces of the global economy on the 'located' locales (Agnew 1987: 27).

Location theory, the 'body of theories which seek to account for the location of economic activities' (Johnston, Gregory & Smith 1994: 339), has widely posited its focus on such an interrelationship and on the influences of socio-political and economic factors on the processes of locating, dis-locating and re-locating the settings for social interaction in the global system.

What seems to be relevant in Agnew's approach is his methodological attempt to re-position and expand on the notion of place in which *location* is viewed as playing a determinant role as a theoretical concept. In philosophy and psychology, the notion of *location* has also generated various conceptual indications of its relevance in the disciplines and in people's everyday life (Casey 1997; Seamon & Mugerauer 1989).

It appears, then, that different disciplines have, from different *positions* (the notion of *location*, in fact, does involve that of *position*), contributed to a theoretical investigation of the notion of place/location. Although it is outside the scope of this thesis to thoroughly examine the various

¹⁷ Foucault stressed that 'the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that spread out in space' (Foucault 1967, Berlin lectures. Quoted in Shields (1992: VIII). See also Soja (1989: 1).

discipline's approaches to *place/location*, I must say that they all have, in different ways and in different degrees, informed my own approach to place.¹⁸

In anthropology, I feel that the contemporary stress on '*space more than time*' (see above) has set in motion a process of *location*, *dis-location* and *re-location* of the concept of place and, more generally, of the very endeavour of anthropology itself. Titles such as '*localizing strategies*' (Fardon 1990), '*the location of culture*' (Bhabha 1994), '*non-places*' (Augé 1997), '*siting culture*' (Olwig & Hastrup 1997), '*anthropological locations*' (Gupta & Ferguson 1997), reveal the current interest and concern among anthropologists to posit and re-position the grounds on which anthropology stands (or should stand!). As Gupta and Ferguson notice, anthropology seems to struggle to find a coherent *location/position*, or '*a point in between*' (Entrikin 1991) its own theoretical and practical concerns:

on the one hand, anthropology appears determined to give up its old ideas of territoriality fixed communities and stable, localized cultures, and to apprehend an interconnected world in which people, objects, and ideas are rapidly shifting and refuse to stay in place. At the same time, though, in a defensive response to challenges to its 'turf' from other disciplines, anthropology has come to lean more heavily than ever on a methodological commitment to spend long periods in one localized setting (Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 4).

In my view, these current anthropological attempts have arisen, consciously or unconsciously, also as a reaction to the postmodernist thinking that '*the discursive construction of identity and place in the social order has little or nothing to do, except coincidentally, with physical location or territorial expression*' (Harvey 1993: 16), and, as an ongoing consideration that postmodernism, which '*appears to be the preoccupation of a segment of the privileged class, ... is hardly of concern to trade unionists, social workers, health providers, the unemployed or the homeless*' (Harvey 1993: 25). In fact, despite the fact that the flux and mobility of modern life may have made the conceptualisation and experience of *place/location* rather 'mobile,' this is constantly opposed and questioned by *location* as *locution*, the voice of the 'homeless, the 'oppressed,' of those in 'diaspora' looking for a physical location and a territorial expression, searching for a place and a sense of place. As I wrote in chapter three, the conflicts that *place and senses of place* generate

may question a certain congruence of place, which sees places as uniform (is this the result of an objectification of place?), and set in motion an analysis of the people's variegated

¹⁸ However, as the reader may have already noticed, I have privileged the 'position' of *social geography* in my attempt to contribute towards an *anthropology of place*.

experience of place as well as the anthropologist's own awareness and senses of the place in which he or she is conducting fieldwork.

Although I am aware of a certain 'technologization of anthropological knowledge' (Moore 1996: 7) and of its implications (see chapter three), it is my firm conviction that nothing can substitute for fieldwork, the 'face-to-face' encounter with other people and places, the being located and letting other people locate 'you' (see chapter two) in the local 'field' of human relationship and reciprocity. The different trajectories/routes of both anthropologists and people 'on the ground' intersect, in specific *locations* in time and space, to lend authority to anthropologists' ethnographic accounts.

In addition, given the flux and mobility of modern life, *Tudi Gong* temples express, in the senses of place of several of my raconteurs, a desire for fixed reference points and, in my view, they are illustrative of the Chinese 'locative' view (Faure 1987: 338) of the world. This view has, to a considerable degree, influenced my own anthropological attempt. In chapter three, in fact, I wrote that,

the city of Taipei and Datong district in particular, seem to have compelled me towards finding my 'walking pathways' in the confusion and vitality of the metropolis. Tudi Gong temples gave me some kind of 'fixed reference point' in the flux of the city and of the district's everyday life. Tudi Gong temples have become, to a certain extent, 'written words' in a 'mobile' and 'polyphonic' city such as Taipei.

In this context, the notion of *place/location* has the potential of resisting a generalised view of, and writing about, people and places which appears to haunt anthropology nowadays. Each place/location, in other words, as *Tudi Gong* temples seem to show, tells its own stories and conveys its own distinctive colour, smell and taste.

This assumption leads me to mention what I would refer to as the 'positionality' or the 'locative' experience of the anthropologist. In chapter three, I wrote that during fieldwork *my own position as an anthropologist differed according to the locations in which I found myself, thus requiring different styles and methodologies for collecting data. The city and the countryside were not the only two locales which demanded a differential approach on my part. I would stress that even the various temples in Datong district, for example, their specific characteristics, location, organisation and information - both oral and written - available on them, coupled with the connections I managed to establish in each locale, required a distinct series of research strategies.* This also offered different perspectives from which to look/speculate upon both on *Tudi Gong* and place.

The example of air-force pilots, I proposed to the reader in the first part of this chapter, is complemented by Augé (1997: 117) who affirms that,

ethnology always has to deal with at least two spaces: that of the place it is studying (village, factory) and the bigger one in which this is located, the source of influences and constraints which are not without effects on the internal play of local relations (tribe, kingdom, state). The ethnologist is thus doomed to methodological strabismus: he must lose sight neither of the immediate place in which his observation is carried out, nor of the pertinent frontiers of its external marchlands (Augé 1997: 117).

One may also say that the 'external marchlands' also comprise the academic localities the anthropologist comes from and those of the place in which he/she conducts his/her fieldwork and the 'theoretical' and 'methodological' perspectives which characterize them. In this context, the anthropologist is also doomed to a life of '*shifting contexts*' (Strathern 1995) which, in my view, has the potential of being heuristically advantageous for the anthropological endeavor. I feel, in fact, that my affiliation to the Institute of Ethnology (Academia Sinica, *Taipei*) during the whole period of my fieldwork constituted a privileged location for inquiry and understanding. The strategic operation of 'shifting' between *academic locations* and the *situatedness* of the fieldwork experience is also indicative of the ways in which I have approached *place*, both as an analytical concept and as experienced, through *Tudi Gong* cults, in people's practices of everyday life.

***Tudi Gong and place as community and identity:
the practice, ambiguities and contradictions of place***

Urban neighbourhoods and rural villages are dotted with temples dedicated to Tudi Gong and, to a certain degree, are representative of the people living on those territories. As the first temples established when settling in a new place, these temples can tell us of those places/local histories, changes and developments which have happened through time. Tudi Gong, therefore, may be seen, in the very words of the majority of my raconteurs, as the 社區之神, 'the spirit of a community living on a specific territory.'

(from chapter four)

Temples of, and the localised practices and representations associated with Tudi Gong in contemporary Taiwan seem to be, in my view, logically related to people's attempts to create and re-create a sense of themselves and their own identity, a desire for nurturing a sense of community and association, a sense of 'fixity' in the flux of social changes which have the potential, so I was told, to diminish one's own sense of identity and belonging.

(from chapter six)

The above extracts, from my own writing in the previous chapters, relate to the reader the considerable degree to which urban and rural temples of, and localised practices and representations associated with, *Tudi Gong* offer valuable ethnographic insights which valorise my previous intuition that a conceptualisation of the notion of place has to take into consideration its 'community' and 'identity' connotations.¹⁹ At the same time, they also furnish an indication of the interrelationship between the two terms and the potential ambiguities and contradictions these can generate in the 'practice' both of people's everyday life and of anthropology.

¹⁹ See the introductory part *Place and senses of place, theoretical trajectory four*. More importantly, in the process of reading the chapters of this thesis, the reader has certainly noticed that particular attention has been given, from a 'view' from *Tudi Gong*, to the changing Taiwanese senses of place, community and identity.

I feel that the telling of stories about Tudi Gong and place distinctively captures people's desire and 'sense of rootedness in a location, of identification with (and self-identification in terms of) that location, of membership in a unified place-based community, and of a common world view as a result of a common geographical experience...' (Ryden 1993: 59).

However, as I have indicated in chapter six, my ethnographic insights seem also to suggest that *it is becoming more prevalent, especially among young people and city dwellers, to put a stress on the relational and personal connection and interpretation of Tudi Gong who can be identified as the product of an 'imagined' relationship with Him or with whom/what He may represent. I wonder whether this can be attributed to a certain 'loosening up' of ties with one's place, community and identity as a result of the widespread process of social mobilisation in contemporary Taiwan. Moreover, one can also speculate whether such a phenomenon can be referred to an ongoing process of changing values and attitudes (i.e. cultural traditions and parameters) initiated by Taiwan's rapid modernisation and positioning in the wider context of a global culture with its ambiguous and contradictory tendency to both 'level' and 'individualise' community and identity.* In this context, I share Revill's view that,

the value of community as a concept... is that it throws into prominence the tensions between senses of belonging which form ties between individuals and groups and between people and places. It is not that it enables us to identify a stable or even dominant set of social and cultural characteristics by which a particular place or group of people might be identified. Rather, community focuses interest on the processes that create a sense of stability from a contested terrain in which versions of place and notions of identity are supported by different groups and individuals with varying powers to articulate their positions (Revill 1993: 120).

The continuous interplay, at times ambiguous and contradictory, between community and identity finds in the notion of place I am proposing in this thesis its own theoretical standing and importance. Such interplay may be viewed, I suggest, as a consequence of people's senses of belonging and displacement, of stability and mobility and of a desire for fixed reference points in the confusions and fragmentations of everyday life. In this regard, Baker's observation, which I have proposed several times in this thesis, best grasps the interrelation between Tudi Gong and people's senses of community and identity: *'it is, I think, what the Earth God symbolizes that holds my interest. It stands for a sense of stability, of security, of identity with fixed and unmovable reference points, of community and of belonging'* (Baker 1981: 1).

As a concluding note to this part, I wish to point out that, on a personal level, the notion of community and identity has also generated a 'retelling' of my own senses of community and identity as an anthropologists. In other words, my senses of being part of the wider 'community of anthropologists' and my senses of 'identity' as an anthropologist have developed and been formed during my ethnographic process, in a constant interaction with specific people and specific places.²⁰ The stories I have told in this ethnographic account have substantiated my senses of belonging and attachment to Taiwan and its people and, as Revill stresses in his re-reading of Carol Lake's Rosehill, they have linked me *'to the historical and geographical source of my academic career and it justifies a particular approach to a subject matter: it is an attempt to give meaning and purpose to an inevitably large part of my life'* (Revill 1993: 123).

***Tudi Gong and place as senses of place:
the personality and power of place***

A place, in this sense, is much more than a point in space. To be sure, a place is necessarily anchored to a specific location which can be identified by a particular set of cartographic coordinates, but it takes in as well the landscape found at that location and the meanings which people assign to that landscape through the process of living in it. A sense of place results gradually and unconsciously from inhabiting a landscape over time, becoming familiar with its physical properties, accruing a history within its confines (Ryden 1993: 38).

As the chapters in this thesis have shown, the notion of *place as senses of place* has emerged as a strategic theoretical reference point and as a unifying conduit which has traversed my own and people's attempts to make sense of the places 'we' inhabit. Metaphorically, it has served as an 'imagined conjunction' in a field of different theoretical 'forces' and 'orientations' and as a spatial and temporal 'experiential position' in the manifold and overlapping 'levels' and 'sightings' of everyday life.²¹

To a certain extent, *place as senses of place* has reflected the various functions and connotations that people ascribe to *Tudi Gong* (see chapter four), the many representations and

²⁰ For a discussion of cognate issues, see Gupta & Ferguson (1997). In addition, this part can also question the fact that anthropologists' desire for community, association and collaboration during fieldwork is not always coupled with the same desire once they are back in their academic localities.

²¹ See especially the introductory part *Place and senses of place, Theoretical trajectory three* and *Some conclusions: where the trajectories intersect...* and chapter three.

stories they tell about Him (see chapter five) and the localised histories which are inscribed in the places His temples are sited (see chapter one and two). Cultural traditions and parameters associated with *Tudi Gong* have been indicative of a sense of, and desire for, attachment and belonging to place, despite the disruptive forces of rapid and radical social changes (see chapter six). The *multilocation* and *multilocution* of *Tudi Gong*, then, have furnished the notion of place a distinctive ethnographic ground from which to expand its polyvalent and polyphonic dimensions.

The Taiwanese attempt to re-appropriate one's own place by resisting local environmental pollution and degradation (i.e. nuclear power plant) may inspire the very anthropological endeavour, and anthropologists in particular, to revisit critically its/their own stories and practices of place. This attempt will, hopefully, allow anthropologists to discover the extent to which the power and personality of place, and the senses of place involved, have 'dictated' their own ethnographic process, both in the field and in the text.

The anthropologist as Tudi Gong: the 'author'ity of place

One of the main directions I have outlined in this thesis has been that of addressing the cult of *Tudi Gong* both as a religio-social phenomenon of intrinsic interest, but also as an 'appropriate vehicle' and a 'fixed reference point' for exploring and analysing the dynamic social changes which have been occurring in contemporary Taiwan. Especially in the previous chapter, I have speculated on the extent to which popular representations of *Tudi Gong*, especially those of *spy* and *recorder* of the most important events occurring in the community/territory He is protecting could serve as a kind of 'barometer' for monitoring the Taiwanese changing senses of place, community and identity.

In this vein, I wonder whether this newly included representation of *Tudi Gong* could be transposed, metaphorically, to the very endeavour of anthropology itself and the benign, often naive, sometime deceptive nature of *Tudi Gong* to the role of the anthropologist in a specific social context. I feel, in fact, that there are various stimulating resemblances between the anthropologists and *Tudi Gong* which I wish to highlight, in the form of anecdotes, in the following concluding portrayals.

In chapter six, I wrote that *'my own understanding of contemporary Taiwanese society suggests that people have a continuous desire to 'build up' a 'network of human relationships and reciprocity' - which, indeed, can be viewed as one of the functions of Tudi Gong cults - in an atmosphere of renqingwei 人情味 (human touch, friendliness and hospitality)'*. Like the 'benign' *Tudi Gong*, the

anthropologist seizes opportunities to manufacture these everyday networks. The consequent 'building up' of trust-based relationships can 'dictate,' as my experience in the field has shown (see chapter three), the very ethnographic process. Ethnography, in fact, as Fabian stressed, 'is produced in a highly contextual, intersubjective situation' (1979)²² in which, like the various *Tudi Gongs*, anthropologists portray a unique personality, style and human touch both in the field and in the text.

Various times during my fieldwork several of my good Taiwanese friends would, jokingly, address me as *Tudi Gong* and inquire about His 'state' in Taiwan, thus baffling me on whether they were referring to my state or His. This recalls to my mind the fact that during ritual activities, *Tudi Gong* is normally represented as a 'jolly old man' with a 'lively sense of humour,' making 'jokes at the expense of everyone, especially the anthropologist' (Ahern 1973: 6); or that, as in the case of *A-Ma* in *Yongxing* village (see chapter two) and of several elderly people, my academic interest on *Tudi Gong* and my frequent visits to His temples would often be associated with the actual practice of worshipping Him.

Often, I also functioned as a 'guide' - one of *Tudi Gong's* representations - for my Taiwanese friends, leading them through the streets of *Datong* district in search of *Tudi Gong* temples. Their reactions and jokes to the fact that a 'foreigner' would guide them to have a grasp of 'their place' and its grassroots temples, would 'dislocate' them considerably.

The anthropologist, in fact, like *Tudi Gong*, is held to be 'knowledgeable' of the places he or she inhabits. People's lives and practices, with which anthropologists constantly engage, leave in the same anthropologist a distinctive and indelible mark which, in turn, should influence his or her reworking of the anthropological discipline.

A paper I gave on *Tudi Gong temples, senses of place and ethnographic writings* at the Institute of Ethnology in *Taipei*,²³ gathered an unexpected number of people, especially young scholars and students from various universities. The organiser of the talk, quite surprised to see such a large audience for what was meant to be an informal talk, told me in a half-humorous manner: '*Tudi Gong still has ling*'

²² Quoted in Crick (1982: 26). The article to which Crick refers is Fabian, J. 1979. Rule and process: thoughts on ethnography as communication. *Philosophy of Social Science* 9, 1-26. See chapter three.

²³ 從土地公廟來談地方意識與民族誌寫作. Paper presented at the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, *Taipei*, Taiwan, 8th November 1996.

(土地公還有靈). He was certainly referring, as he himself explained to me later, to the actual fact that *Tudi Gong* still hold a power and authority among the Taiwanese but also to the 'attraction' which I myself caused: a foreign anthropologist who in Chinese would tell stories about a 'spirit' who is very much part of the practice of everyday Taiwanese life. The majority of the questions were not only concerned with theoretical issues but also with my experience of place and *Tudi Gong* and with the ways people in Taiwan actually feel about, and practice, *Tudi Gong* cults. In other words, they were treating me almost as if I were representing the places - a distinctive *Tudi Gong* feature - in which I conducted my fieldwork.

In several cases, my 'passion' for knowing and understanding local stories of people and places through the study of *Tudi Gong* temples set in motion, for many of my younger friends, a process of 'getting to know' the traditions of their ancestors and land. In the words of a young friend of mine: ***'I didn't know that Taiwanese culture and local histories and practices were so interesting. My parents have never told me. Please, tell me more stories about it...'*** In this context, the anthropologist as *Tudi Gong* seems to exemplify a role of 'guardian and teller of traditions' and a tendency to fix and *'make solid what melts into air,'* inverting Berman's celebrated title.²⁴

It may also happen, as Augé points out, that the anthropologist's *intervention* and *curiosity* *'restore to those among whom he is working an interest in their own origins which may have been attenuated by, even completely stifled, by phenomena connected with more recent actuality: urban migrations, the arrival of new populations, the spread of industrial cultures* (Augé 1997: 43). During the months I spent in Yongxing village, in fact, the villagers would often engage in discussions about their own past and that of the place they inhabit and about the social changes which have affected their village life.

In chapter two I wrote that on one of the last days of my fieldwork ***Lin cunzhang told me that since my arrival in the village there had been a lot of discussions on Tudi Gong and the local development of the place. He wished to encourage the villagers to clean the old stone of the earlier Tudi Gong temple and put it on display... Teacher Lin was also thinking of starting to tell the story of the village and its local culture from the Tudi Gong temple. This is part of an***

²⁴ See Berman, M. 1982. *All that is solid melts into air*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

educational project in Nantou county to introduce and encourage students to familiarise themselves with local cultures.

This example leads me to consider the fact that, like *Tudi Gong*, the anthropologist functions as a 'witness' and 'recorder' of events occurring in the places in which he/she is positioned, as a form of 'discrete surveillance' over people everyday practices. *Tudi Gong's* controlling of the 'ghosts' in His community/territory resembles the anthropologist's attempt at analysing (and resisting) all those forces of social change which can contaminate and disrupt the 'place' under investigation.

Like *Tudi Gong*, however, the anthropologist may show the 'other face' in various ways. He/she may establish or be driven into establishing subtle forms of 'contractual relationships' with his/her 'human clientele'; he/she may claim or feel a desire to be considered as the 'absolute authority' on specific people and places, thus running the risk of treating them as a commodity or property.²⁵ In this regard, transgressing other anthropologists' physical and theoretical territories can be felt as a threat to some anthropologists' knowledge of and authority on specific places.

Like *Tudi Gong*, the anthropologist can be both *naïve* and *sly*: on the one hand, he/she can be cheated by his/her 'raconteurs' who may tell stories that the anthropologist wishes to hear; on the other, the anthropologist may deceive his/her 'raconteurs' by narrating people's words, practices and places ***'into an over-regard for issues which may be imprudently preset by the way they are located in the discourse of a far away (academic) place'*** (see chapter three).

Most important, in my view, the anthropologist's loosening ties with 'place' (both physically and theoretically) has the potential to favour in anthropology a utopian/universal view of the world more than a locative one (Faure), an ideologized view more than a pragmatic one (Weller); a view based on unconscious models more than on conscious or home-made ones (Ward) and an accent on beliefs more than practices (Watson).²⁶ In short, to privilege 'ad hoc' practices and narratives over 'ontic' ones (Lightfoot).²⁷

²⁵ On this issue see, for example, Rodman (1992: 641).

²⁶ The reader may refer to chapter six in which I have discussed such views in the context of Chinese religion. In addition, Bourdieu's talk of maps as *'abstract space, devoid of landmarks or any privileged centre'* versus the *'practical space of journeys actually made, or rather being made'* (Bourdieu 1989: 2) further exemplify this point.

²⁷ See above: *Tudi Gong and place as territory: the authorisation of place.*

Entrikin, very aptly, stresses that *'the scientific search for universals seems to trivialize the interest in the particularity of places,... the demand for universal ethical principles appears to undermine the significance of the moral particularity associated with the individual's attachment to a place-based community (and) an understanding of the ways in which the experience of place plays an important role in the construction of individual and group identity'* (Entrikin 1993: 3.134). He, then, continues by offering a strategic 'view' from which to reposition the dichotomy:

this divide between the existential and naturalistic conceptions of place appears to be an unbridgeable one, and one that is only made wider in adopting a decentered view. The closest that we can come to addressing both sides of this divide is from a point in between, a point that leads us into the vast realm of narrative forms. From this position we gain a view from both sides of the divide. We gain a sense both of being 'in place' and 'at a location,' of being at the center and being at a point in a centerless world. To ignore either aspect of this dualism is to misunderstand the modern experience of place' (Entrikin 1991: 134).

The representation of *Tudi Gong* as a 'mediator' has hopefully allowed the stories told in this ethnographic account to contribute towards reducing the distance between the two ends of the bridge, and in anthropology, between *culture* as it is known during fieldwork and *culture* as it is portrayed in a written account, between ethnography as a process and as a product, as method and as genre (Agar 1995).

In addition, *'places do not have to be national centers of cultural attention or to have accreted a thick sediment of well-publicized history in order to be richly significant - that a complex, deeply felt sense of place can emerge whenever and wherever people settle on the land long enough to develop shared experiences and tell stories about those experiences'* (Ryden 1993: 99). By telling stories about *Tudi Gong* and *place*, my intention was to communicate about the ordinary, 'smaller places' of everyday life and the strategies and processes through which both my 'raconteurs' and I, myself, have made sense of ourselves and the world 'we' inhabit together.

Given the spatial and temporal contingency of my ethnographic process, this attempt, although well-intentioned, does not claim to be definitive and all-encompassing. Many stories have yet to be told and who knows how the company of these future story-tellers might further enrich our understanding of ourselves and our world?

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